

**Who am I?
Who am I to the world,
or to the people in it?
Why do adults of higher
standards
— grimace?
Am I a menace to society?**

**Does it seem that my
infatuation
and interest, are only in
drugs, fast cars
and turfs?**

check out the rest of Stunna Boy's POW on page 12

art by Rueben Martinez



Editor's Note

We're still reeling with joy and excitement over last week's 9.13 issue on "the system." Wow, it's such a stirring issue to say the least. If you haven't viewed this incredible issue yet, well, get on it, 'cause every single piece, from the beginning to the end, is "system-related," from the workshop participants, to the numerous who reach out to us via snail mail from group homes, the CYA, the CDC (from mainline, to the SHU, to Ad. Seg., to death row), to those on parole, weigh in on "the system." Like we said last week, it is our goal to make sure that this particular 9.13 issue reaches all the right (and wrong) hands. So if you have an address, shoot it to us and we'll do the mailing.

Exciting news, this week we will be attending the San Francisco Public Defender's Juvenile Justice Summit, "Raising Up Our Youth: Building Safer Communities," at the San Francisco Civic Center Main Library Koret Auditorium. Not only do we have a place on one of the panels, we have Beat poets, Will Roy aka the Poetic Prisoner and Gellé Tolbert sharing their written words, and to top it off, we have a Beat table, where we will be distributing not only the powerful "system" issue, but other back Beat issues. We're sure The Beat Within will be a hit at this function. Well give you the lowdown in the next issue!

A Beat first — we were suspended for two weeks in one of our favorite institutions, which will remain anonymous in this issue, 'cause we do want to go back. Anyhow, we have tried our darnedest to work with this institution. We have tried to have meetings with staff. We have bent over backwards to make sure this system is happy with the end product, from the workshops to the paper.

Well, what happened was unfortunate to say the least. Of course it revolves around immature wannabe gangsters who thought it would be funny to write a bullshh piece in The Beat, which then frustrated other young people who are caught in the bull, and they, in turn, brought it to the attention of the staff on the unit who wrote it up in an I-R (Incident Report). Well, once you get a report written up on you, you know how this then raises many eyebrows. So, last week we received a voicemail saying that our program will be suspended for two weeks until their "gang specialist" can take a look at the publication.

Little do these few young people, who pose as young gangsters, know their stupidity is definitely gonna cause a change in The Beat Within, particularly in their respected institution. We're not mad at the officials who control and work in juvenile, we're of course disappointed by their way of handling our program. We're very disappointed by the young people who have ruined a good thing for the majority of the writers in the facility. The funny thing is we have stellar writers coming up with knockout pieces every single week, and we never hear a peep, yet it takes one "very stupid" piece, and all of a sudden, we're suspended.

Chances are good that we'll be back in that Hall doing our programs for all those interested young people who flock to our workshops, 'cause it's either The Beat or your cell, but it's gonna be different. For one, there's talk that this institution will no longer allow nicknames in The Beat, and secondly, no longer allow written pieces that are not related to the topic(s) to be published! Lastly, we may even have to forward all the writings to the juvenile hall authorities to view before The Beat goes out! All due to one "stupid" piece! Yeah, we're pissed! Yeah, we take offense, but in truth, there have been a few stupid pieces coming out of The Beat from this hall this 2004 season. Hey, we at The Beat should have been smarter as editors when dealing with this no-nonsense facility. After reviewing them, we should have immediately cut these pieces out, but we had our reasons for publishing them, even if it was all about our "From The Beat" response to the writer.

So here we sit (not really), suspended, while we wait to hear from this institution about our next step. We have once again offered to come down and meet with administration and the gang experts — still no word. We sure would love to be put on the hot seat, 'cause, yeah, we're humans and we make mistakes, but damn do we believe in what we've been doing since 1996!

Speaking of 1996, what should not be overlooked is that this fine publication has an incredible following, and in truth, The Beat Within will continue to do what it set out to do way back then, and that is touch lives. We prefer the face-to-face relationship, but if we someday have to totally rely on letters, well, then we'll recreate our program/publication around the numerous letters we receive each week.

Good news! While one county says timeout for two (weeks), another county is preparing to open their doors for a Beat presentation for its staff, and a presentation plus workshop for the young people from the Sonoma County Juvenile Hall. We are elated about the possibility of giving the young people up north a consistent voice in this priceless paper.

Lastly, we truly believe that in order for The Beat to thrive, it does take a complete buy-in from the administrations of the Juvenile Halls we visit. We're not asking them to take over the program, we are simply asking you officials to take time to talk to us, teach us, share with us, and we'll do the same, 'cause, in truth, we too have insight. We don't receive several hundred letters a

week for nothing!

As we print the first of two installments from The Beat's 9th Editor's Note Contest on pages 79-85, we feel it is only appropriate to announce The Beat's 10th Editor's Note Writing Contest question! Ready writers!? This go 'round we want to know, "What is your all-time favorite movie, and why?" We are curious about why this movie moves you so much. Tell us how it relates to you. Tell the readers about a time, maybe the first time, you saw the movie. We want the inviting details describing why this movie will always have a place on your movie shelf/heart. Be creative when painting the picture of this special, special movie.

With this said, the deadline for contest submissions is July 31, 2004. We will award four prizes/money orders for our favorite pieces. Our top prize is a \$100 money order for first place. Followed by a \$50 money order for second place, and for third and fourth place, \$25 money orders. So, good luck writers in attempting to create a moving and telling piece about your all-time favorite movie. We encourage all of you editor's note readers to take this topic on!

Before we call it an editor's note wrap, we want to let you know that some of the writings in this 9.14 issue of The Beat were submitted during our 9.13 workshops but were not on the topic of "the system," so we saved them for publication at this time. And here's the 4-1-1 on the two topics addressed in the workshops leading up to the writing! Our first topic was "Culture Shock — We always hear a lot of great things about culture, but we know there are two sides to every coin. So what we'd like to know is how your culture has made living more difficult in certain situations. By culture we mean the customs practiced where your family and/or you are from, the religion you practice, your ethnicity, your lifestyle (like hip-hop, street, gangsta).

Has your culture ever stopped you from seizing an opportunity? Has having a family from a different country ever put restrictions on who you could date and when, how late you could stay out, where you could go, who you were supposed to hang out with? Or, have you ever wanted to do something that wasn't cool with your homies, say, go to school every day, where clothes that looked straight to get a job? Or, have you ever secretly hated some lyrics that degraded women, men or some other group, but had to listen to it because everyone else was? What did you do, did it split your loyalties?

Or do you know somebody who you think was held back because of their culture? Have you ever had a friend or a relationship with someone whose culture made it tough to hang out with or love each other?

Describe an experience you've had when your culture actually put an obstacle in your life, what we're calling 'culture shock.'"

The second topic was "Experiences That Cause You To Change — We all experience changes in our life at one point or another. Sometimes things happen to us or we go through experiences that cause us to act/think differently. Do you remember an experience that caused you to change?

Experiences like a parent/sibling dying, a rape, childhood beating(s), leaving the country, and incarceration all leave a great impact on our minds. Do you remember something that will stick with you till the end? Do you remember a time that an experience made your heart turn cold/warm? How did it change your life and/or your attitude?

Now tell us, when did you change and what made it happen?"

Damn, from these writing sessions we came up with a number of POWs (Pieces of the Week). Give us a moment to pay our dear respects to the following talented/serious writers... Props to Broken Glass, for dropping a quadruple shot of pieces, as well as Spooky out of Hillcrest; a double dose from The Antichrist out of Marin; Ben and Socrates each drop two of their own POWs, along with Larry, Toni, Scooby, Gerrell, Traviesa and Stunna Boy out of 150; Young Ee's represents San Francisco; and Christopher drops his power from Maricopa County in Arizona.

This 9.14 issue is dedicated to our sole graphic designer and Beat layout king, Manen Pau. For over three years, maybe four, he has played a major role in getting us The Beat Within. Manen is the man who week in and week out prepares the template for The Beat Within, while creatively dropping the numerous pieces, pull quotes and artwork. Manen is a very humble colleague who hardly if ever fusses, even when us editors come to him with last-minute changes. He comes in and does his work, laying out the two Beats (Big and Santa Clara) each and every week. He has a no-nonsense approach that works so well with us Beat editors. Manen, thank you for playing such a vital role in creating this publication over the years — it means so much to us all — with plenty of Beat style and respect, too. Thanks again.

On a final note, we'll leave you this week with our "fingers crossed." We hope by the time the next issue of The Beat is published, we will be back full force in all our workshops doing what we enjoy so much, working with you writers in the Hall. Until the next one, we're thinking good thoughts . . .

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The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

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Writers: Thanks to all the participants in our workshops in the San Francisco's Youth Guidance Center and Log Cabin Ranch School and the Walden House Facility, Maricopa County, Arizona, Walden House, Canon Barcus Community Center, San Mateo, Napa, Santa Clara, San Luis Obispo, Alameda County, Santa Cruz County and Marin County Juvenile Halls. As well as Riker's Island in New York City, Natural Bridge in Virginia, and Hidden Truth in Rhode Island. If you have any questions or comments about The Beat Within, or if you would like to become a subscriber, contact us at: 275 Ninth St. SF.CA. 94103 or call (415)503-4170 or check us out at

www.thebeatwithin.org

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From The Beat: Who else but the amazing Ms. Wadud steps up this week, shhh, this wonderful woman steps up every week! She's one of the great counselors in juvenile hall as far as we're concerned. What's up with the rest of you caring gifted counselors? Show the readers of The Beat Within some love! We know many of you have mouthpieces, try putting your words of inspiration down on paper!

the Hall (a blessing in disguise)

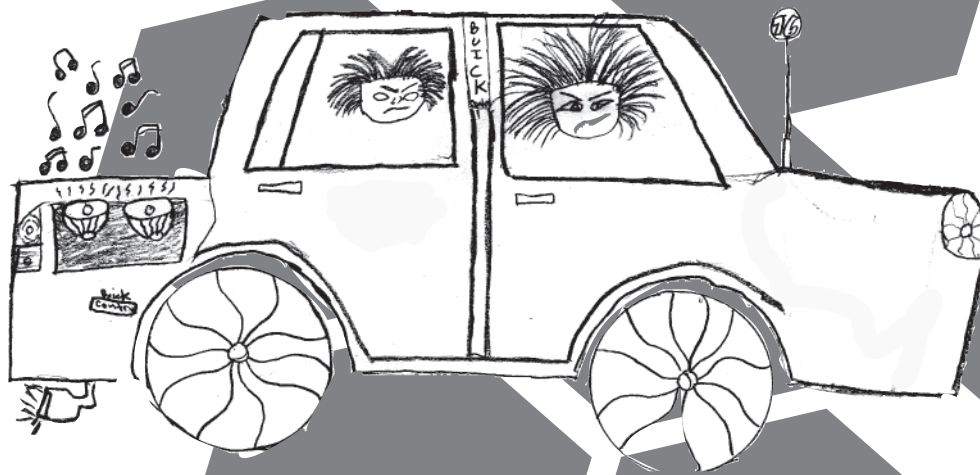
I hate to see you go and I love to see you come back. When you're in the Hall I don't have to worry about you. I don't have to worry 'bout picking up the paper and reading that one of you kids got shot or killed. This is so sad but it is reality.

Before you get released, I try to encourage you to do right, to go to school, don't drink or do drugs, don't forget to pray, respect your parents and don't run from your placements. One out of ten of you listen. Nine of you come back and truly, I am so happy to see you!

One of these times, on one of your return trips you might just heed the game I spit. I pray for you always. I love you more than you know. I only want the best for you. Sorry to say, at this time in your life, this is what is best for you.

Welcome back! Now go to your room!

-Ms. Wadud, 150 Counselor



One out of
ten of you
listen.
**NINE OF
YOU COME
BACK.**

From The Beat: Rashad Lowry is a counselor in B1 in San Francisco County. He always sits in during our workshops, and we are pleased to present a piece written by him for everybody.

Why was this country founded on slavery?

Why are people selling drugs and liquor on almost every corner in this society?

Why do cops shoot people for no reason?

Why do people go to jail for child molestation and get out only to commit the same crime over and over?

Why do people who shoot people get another chance to do it?

Why are people hungry and homeless, sleeping on the doorsteps of rich people who could never use all the rooms in their homes?

Why do some kids fail in school?

Why do war veterans get left to die in the street?

There are a whole bunch of questions I have for whoever you are.

-Rashad, B1 SF/YGC Counselor



King Yella

Complication and misguidance
Has made you resort to violence
But when I read your poems
There's silence
Your words bleed and show your human, too
Just wanted you to know
That I know what you're going through
And my homegirl
Says she loves you
So I wrote this to encourage you
The streets are tired
Move on to something new
As soon as I thought the world
Was coming to an end
'The Beat' sent me a friend
Through a pen
I know it's grimey in your 'hood
And how it's hard being misunderstood
But in the level of your writing
You set a standard so I expect you to do good
I know you don't know me
From a brick wall
I just wanted to encourage
You to stand tall
Next to so much pride
I am humble and small

-Broken Glass, San Mateo

From The Beat: This is a great tribute to all the writers in The Beat — hopefully this will bring home the realization that your words are felt beyond the walls that hold you in. King Yella does step to it each and every week; so do you. The standards both of you set make us reach for a higher level. Instead of humble and small, we hope his words (and others who read yours) inspire readers to feel lifted by their strength and power.

Finish Line

One step from the finish line
eleven months for one crime
one step from breaking loose
of these binds
It's been a long race
sweat and tears run down my face
I'm so happy I'm about to leave this place
Everyone's clapping for me
telling me I'm almost there
but here comes an opponent
out of nowhere
Through the whole race he's
been trying to push me off track
he's stayed on my back
At first I pushed him aside
reminded myself to keep my eyes
on the prize
But I overload and I can't take it
I begin to think I can't make it
So he gets a lead
and takes off
I'm in his dust and shadow
feeling like running cattle
Because I don't know where I'm running
don't know where I've been
if I give up
there's no way I can win
So I run with my heart
instead of with my feet
so fast I melt the concrete
There he is
We're eye to eye

A Woman's Worth

Hey ladies
Out there making babies
Ladies with a man doing you
shady
Do you know
How wonderful it is to be a lady?
Our beautiful curves
That will make cars swerve
Our bedazzling comments
And the way we twist words
Our seashell eyes
And thick thighs
The type to make a man
Tell his wife lies
We're stronger than anything
known on this earth
We keep rising
When society kicks us in the dirt
Hearts as big as buildings
Holding in unexplainable feelings
The kiss we give a man
Or the warmth of our hands
We glimmer like goddesses with
our golden tans
Beautiful hair
Curly, nappy or straight
Done in painful styles
Only a woman can take
Who cares if it ain't yours
You bought it, you can rock it
Everyone's an original
Twirk it if you've got it
Women are the fruit of this earth
Do you even realize
How much you're worth?
More precious than a thousand
Diamonds and rubies
More beautiful than when the
Sunrise touches the seas
And exactly what a man needs
He'll fall in love and never want
to leave
On a hot day you're his cool
breeze
A man will die for you
Dedicate his life for you
Give up his ways and start anew
To make your smile shine
through

The pain you might be going thru
Then there's the creation of life
Remember what good is a
husband without a wife?
We have the privilege of being a
mom
Their smiles become our sun
And their cries dawn
We help the world grow and carry
on
Some women
Take advantage what they've got
And for ten dollars
Will let a man work their spot
Or they dance butt naked at clubs
And tell men lies for dubs
Their job is to convince them
that
They're in love
I understand them
Some of these people are my
friends
And if I'm putting someone down
I didn't mean to offend
But your body is your friend
Not a man's pig pen
Don't let anyone disrespect you
And don't fall for something
that's not true
You've got your whole life
For someone to love you
They may beat us down
And call you names when you're
not around
But always stand your ground
Have confidence in who you are
And what you want to be
This is what
Being a woman
Means to me.

-Broken Glass, San Mateo

From The Beat: Damn — this isn't a piece, it's a manifesto and a plea all at once. Clearly, you're a powerful voice — you're so able to speak your mind that all sorts of folk look for your writing each week in The Beat. However, don't pack the punch that your actions are capable of. Get out there, step to the level of your writing, and provide an example for those who need someone to look up to. Don't just celebrate your body, celebrate your mind and your heart.

speed past him and wave goodbye
this is a race for my life
I have to try
One step from the ribbon now
one step till I'm free
the cameras flash
when he's one heel away from me
The devil's lost
he finally leaves
I'm the champ
I won my life back
my freedom back
at the finish line
and I will never look back
my life is on a new track

-Broken Glass, San Mateo

From The Beat: This is stunning — a credit not only to your skill with the pen, but the resolve you've shown. Believe it or not, however, as this race ends another one starts right up. This race will come with its own set of challenges, some of which will be even more difficult. Having said that, it's way easier to find support from others in this new race, and it's also easier to avoid the challenges if you're looking out for 'em. One step from the ribbon, you've done yourself proud.



the worst feeling in the world you now regret

Woman/Man

I start to think it was funny that women can't fight, but when I thought again it wasn't funny. It's somethin' about most woman, that's why the hell they're so nice, caring, patient, and wanna be in love. Meanwhile men are evil, mean, rude and wanna be in charge, trying to be a boss, and kill over stupid stuff.

It seems like most woman are angels and most men are devils. When shhh happens to men it haunts us and make' us evil. But a woman — they just let it go.

And why the hell are most women so loyal. Most men always want to be scandalous and run shhh.

A woman would take care of a child while most men would leave it for itself in the wild.

And women don't want to hurt no one physically like a man would. I think it's something most women got that most man don't have — women got a heart. And if every man had think like a woman the world would be a much safer place.

-Larry, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is such a thoughtful commentary about women versus men. From your 'hood, have you ever met a man that has a good heart and is peaceful? Women can be scandalous too but you are right for the most part, men are mostly the murderers, the rapists, and the warmongers. But in the present day and in history, there were/are many peaceful men out there that had/have good hearts like Martin Luther King and Malcolm X; and currently we have Muhammad Ali, Mos Def, Talib Kwali and Nelson Mandela who are peaceful and responsible warriors for the people. We would like to challenge you to find out more about some of these men of history and present day. This can be what transforms you, inspires you and helps you realize that it is ultimately a choice to be a great man. You are capable of this!



regret

The worst feeling in the world

You now regret

Regret of the first shot

That led to ten more

Regret of the first hit

That led to countless bowls

Regret of the first line

That made you ask for more

You would do anything for more

Once the money runs out

Making the biggest regret of all

Waking up in the morning

Feeling used and dirty

Hung over

Knowing you had sex with a stranger

Regrets like these

Make you look in the dirty mirror

And cry

Think, "What have I done?"

But your body is still pulsing

With the drugs

That refuse to leave your system

Regretting that you took it at all

-The Antichrist, Marin

From The Beat: Your poems are so raw, like the bright light of early morning, where nothing can be disguised. You already seem to know the emptiness of waking up drugged out next to a stranger. What in your life is wholesome, pure? What gives you real pleasure? Do you think that you could ever find a sense of value in life?

rip MY Loved one

Oh, my friend, let me apologize

For not obstructing your path of wrong

For not having my eyes open

While I led you on a crazy route

For letting you follow my misfortune

For sharing with you the drink of the game

For inhaling with you the smoke of the pain

For encouraging you to hurt and kill my enemies

For making you laugh when you should have cried

Oh, my friend, how sorry I am

For not shielding you

For not being the one

For letting you be unaware

For watching you die in my arms

Oh, my friend, will you ever forgive me

For surviving, for living,

For being the one in whose arms you died?

-Young ee's B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is so sad, but so good. Of course, there's nothing you can do to bring your friend back, but there are things you can do to prevent a tragedy like this in the future. What changes do you plan to make in your life on the outs so that you won't have to write another bitter piece like this in the future? What advice would you give a younger brother or another youngster who looks up to you about how to avoid the pain you're feeling? (We've told you before about your Beat name; sorry, but the name you chose can be confused with a gang we don't want to promote.)



Just Imagine...

Imagine a whole life full of sorrow
Going through each day hoping you won't see tomorrow
Looking at the next man,
wishing some happiness you could just borrow
So to get back at the world you go and spray hollows
Then you get caught and end up in the system
You tell people of how in the outs you always used to
glisten
But you been here around 15 times so they debate on
sending you to prison
You go to the judge and he asks you "why don't you
listen?"
"Is it because mom or your dad has always been missin'?"
So you get mad and then you get to trippin'
Instead of a question or advice you took it as a diss
For a couple of seconds you escape reality as it is
You tell yourself it wasn't your fault — it was his
And then when you finally come back from that little abyss
They tell you that 10 years of your life you're about to miss
For 10 years you won't be able to speak to you sis
For 10 years you'll have to turn around while your cellmate
takes a piss
There won't be no loved ones to give you a good night kiss
You ask yourself if it's a dream or if it's real
For the next ten years you're going t
o be behind cold ass steel
I'ma tell you right now not to think
you gonna get an appeal
'Cause the judges and them don't know how it feel
To have to wait for your next nasty ass meal
All the weakness and fear you have to conceal
See, they'll never learn to comprehend
That in prison everyday you've got to fend
Asking the next inmate if he got a couple
of cigarettes to lend
From then on it's on that guy you'll learn to depend
Until he tells you there's something you've got to surrend
He pulls out a shank and when he asks,
"bend over," you bend
Even though it's something you'll never intend
In prison it's always been a trend
So what would you say if a guy asked you to be his hoe
Of course you'll tell that ninja "hell no!"
After more than 15 times in the Hall
I thought you would know
An old saying that says, "what you reap, you sow"
Prison is the one place you don't want to go
Just know that it was your fault, you made it so
You try to box and fight to improve your skill
So by the time you get out of here you'll be ready to kill
You dream about selling drugs and making a mill
Since you don't know how to count,
you think you're richer than Bill
You know hella people killed trying that, but still
You want a very big house on top of a hill
It might go pretty well until
Those crackhead find an even better pill
So your dream is to live in the fast lane
You dream about going out there and inflicting pain
You think of all your enemies getting slain
But if you don't do it, it just wouldn't be the same
Instead of thinking of all the good things
in life you could gain
You think about cutting open your veins
You get to stressing out and thinking you're insane
Thinking you'll get cured if you could smoke some

Maryjane

Instead of thinking you're living your life in vain
Think of getting yourself out of the rain
Don't you wish they would give you the keys
Or even better, a release
So you can finally see your newborn niece
But you have to stay up all night and miss all your Z's
You imagine a shank slippin' inside you easier than
slippin' on grease
You'll lose all your strength and fall on your knees
In a couple of moments you'll be resting in peace
Then suddenly you'll feel your whole body freeze
Since they can't find the killer they'll blame it on a decease
Ask yourself if that's the type of situation
you want to be in
Wasting away your life in the pen
All because of just one sin
Having to be linked to someone else by a chain
I know you wouldn't want to be in there again
Wouldn't you like for once in your life to win
To be like Chingy at the Holiday Inn
And every cup of juice, pour in some gin
You say you've been cursed
You say it happened at birth
You think you was meant to protect your turf
But they know that's not the way it works
Not if you're living here on earth
But for some reason you get a break even though it
should've been worse
For a while you thought you was done
You thought you was about to be stung
In the old days fo' sho' you would've been hung
Now, you only got one chance, just one
They gave you a break because you're still young
They know as soon as you get out you're gonna run
Then go out and get another gun
Go out and shoot somebody's son
So hold off on your little fun
And when somebody disrespects you,
just hold your tongue
'Cause you might get locked up and not see any sun
You think you shouldn't be in here but out there instead
Protecting your homies from gettin' shot dead
Wantin' to die by that piece of lead
Risking your life for the brown, blue, or red
Please get right and make your life go straight
Grow up and be somebody great
So when you die heaven will open up it's gate
I believe that's everybody's fate
So learn to respect instead of discriminate
And learn to love and not hate
I hope you listen to what I have to say
All I can do is hope and pray
You don't gotta listen right away
Just do it before you really have to pay
I just hope you choose the right way
So when you sit up in bed
Think of what I have said
And try to make it get through to your head

-Toni, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You tell the gruesome future of many young people in Juvenile Hall. Do you think that all young people know the future of what the fast life entails? Why do you think so many young people get caught up and feel like they can't get out of the game or the system? What do you think it will take to get young people off the streets? What do you think is so intriguing about the street life? And, when you are released, what steps are you taking for a better and brighter future? Lastly, you created one of the great Beat flows and we're honored to publish this fine place of poetry.



Been Through It All

been through it all
been through it all
steady pressed by the law
behind four walls
screamin'
but there's no one to call
been through it all
been through it all
steady pressed by the law
behind four walls
screamin'
but there's no one to call
been through
boosters
the losers
the realist dealers
the suckers
the scrilla get us
gorillas
them haters thought
they could see us
been through the pressure
the lecture
being broke
havin' treasure
life is on a scandalous path
so i have to measure
my pleasure
been through
losin' my freedom
livin' on the streets
and then kingdoms
been through
the scandalous system
to fat pockets and platinum
been through
a gat and a knife
to haters testin' my life

been through
a war of flyin' bullets
at my head left to right
been through
the baggy clothes
walkin' to school
in some tight ankle huggers
been through
the joy and the pain
from sunny days to the rain
been off the chain
but i've maintained
but still nothin' changed
been through
some fights
and what's right
been kinda rude
but polite
sippin' incredible hulk
then i'm sippin' smirnoff ice
been through
the feds and the task
to popos and decoys
but after all of this i've
been through
am i a man or a boy

-Scooby, 150 Crew

From The Beat: For sure, you've walked through enough violence for an entire life span, but you seem to understand how that doesn't make you a man. You've probably heard talk about responsibility and manhood, and your flow shows you know surviving the hood is all good. Now if you can transform your experience into wisdom, you can escape the reach of the system and become the man you want to be — a man who can succeed and achieve a life that's happy, joyous and free. You've got the intelligence and talent already; all you need is the wisdom to hold steady. Keep your eyes on the prize, for your great lyrics reflect your great spirit!

death is ALWAYS Near

Death is always near
Hearing footsteps,
but when I turn around no one's there
Experience' death before
Lying lifeless, bleeding heavily on the floor
Wasn't scared just unaware of where I was going
The fear of not ever knowing
Can smell the Grim Reaper's stank breath blowing
Use' to be the type of person to smoke a blunt wit'
the devil
Then turn around
and slap him in the face wit' a shovel
Cold hearted, no hope,
use' to cope wit' narcotic smoke
Awaken in a hospital, what's this?
Still alive?
How on earth did I survive?
So take one look in my eyes and look real deep
Use' to go weeks wit' no sleep
Tears of blood dripping from my eyes
Who says gangsters don't cry?
Life is hard and death is harder
When you die, will you journey much farther?
Alratos.

-Ben, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You write like a prophet. Knowing about life and near death you have gained much wisdom. The question whether you will be willing to die and affect all your loved ones lives and many others needs to be taken to heart by every gangsta and upcoming gangsta. Imagine a life of unity and peace, a life where you don't need to worry as much — this is possible for anyone courageous and intelligent enough to make it happen. You are one of these people and never let anyone let you believe differently because you will be tested and called a quitter, a traitor... Who really is the quitter of life and a traitor to all their real loved ones? They will be.

My Life

My life is a like a constant roller coaster
Filled wit' all kinds of ups and downs
Unaware but never scared
A continuing game of truth or dare
Animosity, expressing my feeling of pain
Until my balloon goes KA-BOOM then you're doom'
Rage influences the room
Where to go?
Where to run?
Livin' a life, staring down the barrel of a gun
Enough madness consumed inside me
My heart turned cold
For the special someone I take a chip off to give them a spot
Continuing murders, when will it stop?
All my life, been living hot, constantly duck the crooked ass cops
Coming in, getting out, returning to a spot of poverty
Stayed high, thinking I can fly
An angel with broken wings, questioning God, "why?"
This is the story of my life
Thanks for your time

-Ben, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thanks for your time! Damn, you left us breathless like after riding a roller coaster. These are the hard and fast questions and feelings asked and felt at the hardest moments in life — the cold heart, the fear, the confusion and final question, "why?" We can see that you have the knowledge of what's pure and true and unless you lose sight of it during the pressures of life, you will fly soon again. Use your time wisely in your placement.

**A continuing
game of truth
or dare
Animosity,
expressing my
feeling of pain**



What they thought of us

they thought we wouldn't make it
they thought that we were trash
every little thing we did we had to ask
we were beaten with whips
hit with fists
sold by law
told we weren't tall
they sold our bodies to go work for another
we were separated from our sisters and brothers
from our fathers and mothers
years later it got a little better
but whites here blacks there
you'd think we would never be together
could not eat where we chose
sat at the back of the bus with filthy clothes
we tried to march and that was all right
but there was still more so we still had to fight
"i have a dream" was heard all over the nation
and little by little it ended segregation
but still we were spat on
sicked by the dogs when we were alone
pushed aside
some people still tried to end our lives
but there was a flaw in their plan
we are still here tryin' to do the best we can
we could go anyplace we might choose
we could get on a boat and take a cruise
we could drink out of the same water faucet
we could make mistakes and it would not cost us
we could have different cultures and be friends
we could walk together talk together
our love would never end
no longer would we jump the broom
or get sent to a little cottage room
no longer would we pick cotton for a master
instead we would be too busy workin' in college on our master's
no longer would we be deprived of our freedom
unless we chose to do bad things or did not follow the creed
no longer would we be separated unless by choice
we all could speak now
we could go spread our voice
no longer would we have to mark around our feet
we could go into shops and try them on
we are now free
but we will never forget the past
thank you jesus praise the lord
we are free at last

-Gerrell, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thank you Gerrell for this paean to the cause of freedom! So much has been accomplished, so much injustice overcome! There is indeed much to celebrate and take pride in. Sometimes we lose sight of the great accomplishments of the emancipation movement first, and the civil rights movement a hundred years later. Thank you for reminding us. We take it that your personal intention when you get your release, is to enjoy and take advantage of your freedom! Props.

**i need some
drugs
man —
i need help**

i Need Help

when i take that hit
high is
what i wanna get
get high just
to suppress
my low self-esteem
and stress
thinkin' to myself
damn i'm fat
hand me that
pipe so i can hit that
tweek for days
hours on end
paranoid that i ain't
got no friends
they all out
just to get me
they were all born
just to get me
so i got to gettin'
skinny
weighin' like
one fifty
for a six-foot frame
that's the size of
a green bean
marks and bumps
all over my face
felt i was made fun of

in every way
went back
to the drugs
to make me feel good
went back
to bein' high
and feelin' understood
i had friends
they all thought
i was funny
but little did i know
they only wanted me
for money
so i sit here
locked up
thinkin' to myself
i need some drugs
man — i need help

-Socrates, 150 Crew
From The Beat: More tight rhymes about the twisted mind of a dope fiend, called back to the pipe's delusional schemes — hours and days on end, pretending the next fiend's your best friend. But then you run out of money, and it's not funny when the bubble bursts. Everything's worse. Addiction's a curse. So get the help you're needing at the next NA (or AA) meeting — you are where they've been, and you can learn to stay clean like them!



When Rage Replaces Thought

shots ring out down the block
black car skintin' off after shots pop
three people layin' down on the ground
only bullet shells can be found
but let's fly only full of hate
and up goes the tally for the death rate
murder is all there is left nowadays
when anger and rage replaces thoughts that are sane

-Socrates, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Here's a taste of the power of the pen to reach the mind of a killer before the killing begins. Put down the gun, is lesson number one — 'cause it's the opposite of protection! A lifetime in a cage for a moment of rage? Better self-correction!



Q-vo Beat!

I just want to introduce myself by letting you know un poco (a little) about myself and what I'm about. My name is Christopher. Soy Mexicano but grew up in LA County. I'm seventeen and like most of the writers I had a "troubled" childhood.

I never knew what a "padre" (father) really was. I was in a foster home since I was nine, when my newborn carnalita (sister) was born addicted to coke. I was a father to my two lil' brothers since I was nine. You feel me! I took care of them like they were my own. After eleven months of home to home we went back to my jefecita (momma). That only lasted three and a half months before she took another linea (line).

Too many haters tried to put us down, so I took things in my own hands. Hurting me I let go, but not my lil' carnalitos, nobody could touch them! That was my attitude that got me into a lot of trouble, pero (but) my attitude maintained the same. I was encarcerado por la primera bes (incarcerated for the first time) in April of 1999.

I was only twelve years old, placed on probation for fighting and tagging in school. Instead of staying with my two carnalitos (homies) on the night my b-day, I went to put in work with two other "homies," just for trying to be cool for older vatos. Padrinos, Sylmar, and Central Juvenile Halls in LA County.

Here I was two months before my fifteenth b-day, and they let me come here to Arizona with my jefecita, a now sober 3.96 to 4.0 GPA ever since I can remember what my GPA was. So nobody could say I was stupid.

I started kicking it with my twenty-four-year-old primo (cousin), which through time I became real close to. I can say he's my older carnal. He taught me all the rules of the game. We were pushing G-funk more than any of our homeboys. For the respect I had to him, I never dared even think about trying it.

I moved in with him and was living the high life. I had cars, money, friends, girls and any luxury the high life can give you. All that ended when my primo caught a case which quickly got him eight years in Florence.

My road dawg was gone and during the same time my seventeen-year-old prima gets diagnosed with leukemia, a deadly disease for those of you who don't know. She battled it off for nine months and from her older brother she got a bone marrow transplant. To all of the people who experienced this with us, it wasn't much being with her in the hospital day-after-day, but to my prima it was, and I am proud to say that I was one of only two people that was there every day for the those nine months.

At the end, I couldn't bear looking at my now eighteen-year-old beautiful prima just nearly die in front of me, so I stopped going for the last week or so, and that's when I was so hurt I started smoking ice to ease my pain. I slowly but surely started seeing my whole life go down the drain. First I ended my attendance at James Sandoval Preparatory High School, then my lady and I start havin' problems. I then lost my cars, one repo'ed and the other wrecked.

I was doing so much ice I knew I could no longer deliver a whole pound, my temptation would take a chuck out and I would probably end up losing my life, so I stopped dealing it.

Three weeks . . . just three weeks before I ended my parole with interstate compact, I violated and went on the run. That only lasted seven months before I turned myself in. Being out there and possibly going back to Juvy until I was twenty-two was a chance I didn't care for no more. Yes! I had lots of friends but I also had lots of dope, feel me! My lady Michelle stood by me . . . until I kept my drug habit. LA County gave me the benefit of the doubt and let Maricopa County take care of me, out on house arrest. For two months I took advantage of my chance and did all I could.

I went to school, worked and dropped two clean UAs (urine analysis) a week. My only problem was "homies" were in and out of my house.

I violated two months after I got out. By now my mother lost her job and I brought her a scale and some ice and all that other stuff to make money. My biggest mistake — now, I wasn't the only druggie, I had got my mom back into habits. In time we were pushin' two ounces a day in nothing but twenties and small amounts like that. We were back in business, made enough to pay the rent, bills and our high.

My mom turned me in all of a sudden, 'cause she realized it was making us enemies.

I only was incarcerated one month. I got out with the same attitude and violated three weeks after. Then my mom gets caught up on some serious charges. Three days later I bailed her out. Two days after that my apartment gets raided and my mom goes back in. By then I had met my true homeboys. We became real close and I respected the fact that he didn't like G so I started smoking hydro to stop my ice habit.

One night my homeboy got shot with a gauge at blank range, right in front of me. The incident caused damage to his hip, a lung, a hole in the other and a bunch of scars on his right side from his neck to his shoulder. That night as I was being chased from the cops I met a twenty-three-year-old, she seen I was in need of help and as I was running from the cops she said run upstairs, go into the apartment on the right and lock the door, I'll be back tomorrow morning. She became my closest friend after my lady. She gave me a roof, food when I needed it, support and even money.

Thankfully my homeboy got out of the hospital a few days later, a true soldado (soldier). He wanted me to go live with him in Yuma, Arizona. He said, "You ain't got nothing here, come on, you got nothing to lose." I felt him to the fullest, but still I felt need to stay.

Staying with that woman I meet these down homies. We were down for each other, but some of the dirt caused me to get a gun. My jefecita gets out and sees all the dirt I'm doing and tries to lock me up. It didn't work, once not twice. Well the third time she scored. The wrong thing is, it happened when I didn't just want to be clean, but I was clean. That was my resolution for 2004.

Now it's February and I'm behind bars till May 06, 2004 when I'm eighteen. Then the state is gonna pick up charges for two high-speed pursitos (pursuits) I had got into since last time I got out. I actually came in for one of those, but got released. Eventually all that will catch up to me, as soon as I get out I will start a new case, this time with the big boys.

Through this I don't have my mom, but now I realized just how much I love her. I'm not telling you guys all this to show off. I'm just writing to give you a real example of how drugs can easily take over your life. So, just think of the things you truly love like familia, your lady, your cars and freedom. Let them be your anti-drug and stay addicted to them if you don't want to go similar things as I did, especially all you lil' twelve and thirteen years olds. It's cool when you're doing things with your older homeboys, but where are they now?

Most important of all, "Smile through all the pain and the rain...just keep your sense of humor." (Tupac)
Much respect to the one that got this off my shoulders
— The Beat.

-Christopher, Maricopa Durango, Arizona

From The Beat: We appreciate your gratitude for us, and we know that you really mean it. After reading your piece we got a very real sense of all the things you've been through, and we envy your ability to turn those negative experiences into learning experiences. What would you tell the child that is following in your footsteps? How would you reach the younger generation so they don't go through the same things you went through? How will you become 'addicted' to positive things as a way to stay away from all the negatives? We wish you the best and we hope you can stay in touch.



Message To The Black Man

In America today, the black man is seen as less than. The low percent that do end up being successful are still mocked and degraded by society's views and standards. So what should 'we' do? Should we cry? Should we prove them right or prove them wrong? Or should we just continue to be stepped on by the white man?

Once upon a time we were kings and queens, rulers and philosophers, holy men and healers. Tribes were built on tradition, a tradition so strong we were feared by most and respected by all. We were invaded. We had for centuries given off vibes of peace and in return had the rug pulled from underneath our feet. Taken from out world and thrown into theirs. No one wanted to believe man would do such a thing as enslave human beings, but they did. They stripped us of our families and loved ones, our culture and our way of life. We became fish out of water.

We were sent on boats to the Caribbean and then to a place of 'freedom' called America. Back then we were held with iron cuffs and chains, a commitment to the white man that we knew nothing about. Today we're held prisoners to guns, gangs, sex, and rap — all things made to help us forget all that they put us through. We have been blessed with great leaders such as Sojourner Truth, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Jr. and Ida B. Wells — magnificent people who we have put to shame. We only remember what they were fighting for instead of living for what they died for.

Money runs us in circles. That's all we seem to care about. We have lost sight of what makes life worth living. It's not money, not sex, not drugs — it's peace. Peace within your own home, within your community and, most essentially, within your own mind.

I write to a black man on death row. A man with no hope, but more peace than anyone I have ever had the privilege of knowing. He writes me with what he has found, and I am frozen by his words. Unfortunately he will never shine light on the world, and was banished from society by the white man. He encourages me to keep reading and growing, that is all that the white man left us in this world. We even lose track of this free gift by becoming absorbed with television, magazines, rap, drugs and money.

So now what should I do? Throw away his lessons like the rest of my people, or put them to practice and pass them on?

I see our black queens in videos pumping their chests and shaking their asses, advertising the message that we can be sold and that we are nothing but entertainment for the world. I am disgusted by this, but are the rest of you? No! What am I trying to do? Well if you have been actively following this then you should have some clue, so like they say, "Can you hear me now? Can you hear me now? Verizon . . ."

Our children are learning to expect less than they deserve, and it's because that is what we are showing them. They wonder why momma ain't got a job or why they know more roaches than people. We always complain that no one will hire you, you can't find a babysitter, womp, womp, womp. Of course no one will hire you if you don't pursue your education, that would be foolish of them. Stop settling for less, success only comes when you work for it. Teach your children education is the key to making it in life, everything else you can take notes for along the way.

You know what's sad? Our people kill one another! And we complain other races treat us unequal, we should be concerned with what goes on within our own race. You cannot fight a war if your army is fighting each other. We kill each other over money and spouses and this false image of respect. We think we get respect by stripping the

next man. Let me make this clear, that is fear, not respect! I will respect a man who makes a legit living, supports his family and treats people with respect as well.

I try to think of how I want to be remembered when I leave this party. I'm not living under anyone's expectations or predictions. I'm living with the knowledge I was given by those who keep hope for our race alive.

What about you? How do you want to be remembered?

Consider this a very important chain letter. Now that you have read this, it is your obligation to put it to use, or at least pass it on

Red yellow, brown, black — always remember your worth.

-Broken Glass, San Mateo

From The Beat: This is the writing of someone who is wise beyond her years, and there is little to say in response as you have covered so much territory. There are a few points we want to make that don't take away from the power of your argument: Throughout history, blacks have been slaves not only of whites, but also of other races — including their own. That is absolutely no excuse for slavery as it existed in the Americas (it was outlawed in Brazil more recently than in the United States), and it still pointedly puts the lie to the words that start our own Declaration of Independence, written almost one hundred years before our country outlawed slavery: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal . . ." We are particularly impressed with your ability to recognize the oppression blacks have faced from within as well as from outside, due to black on black violence (which can be seen today in nearby communities such as East and West Oakland, and Hunter's Point, Bayview, and Sunnydale in San Francisco among others). The only question we have is how are you going to step to the level you set out in this piece. How are your actions going to combat the oppression of your people? When you rise, how will you help others to do the same? The potential is there, Jay, for you to become a truly remarkable leader, but it will be a difficult path to tread. We hope you continue to overcome the obstacles that are in your way — we desperately need leaders like you.

Pain In The Hall

There are good things in the Hall like it help's you to control your anger and to keep you away from drugs. But the worst parts are you're away from your family and you can never know what happen out there.

Like your mom or someone could die and you're here just in your cell having your heart broken, feeling like you're in hell where no one cares and loves you. Just in your cell going crazy crying, stressing, just wishing you were out and it feels like the walls are laughing at you 'cause you're stressing and stuck in the Hall.

I got a roommate who's stressing and heard his mom had a stroke but I tell him it's alright 'cause your mom's alive — God is helping her survive. But with you in here it's not helping, so you need to think you want her alive or dead. Just make her wishes come true for her; be the best kid. Just think what your family are doing right now, just wishing you were out so they can see you.

We got to understand that people out there who love us are crying, missing us, and we're here stuck in the system stressing where no one loves us and where the four walls are laughing and calling us bad kids. But we get through our days cause God loves us and he's telling us that we are good kids, we just made wrong choices.

The way I look at it is the system ain't going to control me. I'm going to control the system 'cause I know I'm going to get out one day. It's like the staff are throwing rocks at us and we got to move fast enough to not get hit. We got more power than them — what can they do give us a hour or put us in our room? But we are already in our room, it's nothing.

All that we need to think about is we got God to protect us, and we just need to think about our mistakes and not do them again. We just have to take care of our family and ourself. All what you need to say to yourself in your cell that all I made a mistake I'm going to do good and I'm getting out soon — then you will never hear the walls laughing at you 'cause you beat the system. And if you get an hour or anything just take it, show the staff that it's nothing.

Well good luck to everyone in your cell. If I could beat the system, you could. You will always feel pain in the Hall, but just think about the good things you will do when you get out.

-Spooky, San Mateo

From The Beat: You spit a lot of knowledge here — we may not fully agree with the confrontational nature of your relationship with staff, but even then we feel where you're coming from. How would you respond to those who are facing serious time — time in the Y or even in the Pen — to whom time back on the outs feels too distant to see? What will it take for you to take your own advice, not only to make it through your time in the Hall, but also to be there for your family back on the outs?



All I wanted was someone
to like me and to not get
picked on. I hate being alone
[crying]. **The only way for it
all to stop is to die.**

Good-bye. [BANG!]

I Woke Up With A Smile On My Face...

David: I woke up with a smile on my face. Today is the day no one will make fun of me. Today is the day I'm gonna make a friend. Today is gonna be a good day.

Narrator: David was picked on all through middle school and the summer before eighth grade. He decided 1999 was gonna be a different year. He went to the mall and bought a new wardrobe, and he got a new haircut. He had an all new makeover.

David: All right, here goes the first day of school. No one notices me yet. Well, time for first period. I think I'm gonna sit in the front today.

Narrator: At first period everyone started to notice David and his makeover, and they started making fun of him. During first period, as he went to sit down in the front of the class, this boy pulled the chair out from under him. This was the beginning. And it started to go the same as the last year.

Fast forward.

Narrator: It's several months into the school year and he's been in six fights, has been stripped, and a whole lot of other pranks have been pulled on him. He's finally decided he's not gonna take it no more, and this is what he does...

David: Everyday, it's something, all I wanted was a friend. All I wanted was someone to like me and to not get picked on. I hate being alone [crying]. The only way for it all to stop is to die. Good-bye. [BANG!]

Narrator: David died alone in his room. He shot himself. He was an only child. Both of his parents worked full time. He never got any attention. And one day he got overwhelmed and gave up. I watched people pick on him and laugh at him. I even laughed, and I never thought nothing of it. He was a big dude. If he didn't like what was happening, he could've said something. But he never did. I wish I would've talked to him. But you know what he did? He made a change that year at Garfield. A change in everyone around him. RIP David.

From The Beat: What a deeply moving and tragic story. Your dialogue tells a tale we all recognize, whether we went to your school or not. The way you write it, makes us feel sympathy for David from the start; maybe it's hearing him speak in "his own voice" — 'cause we all have that private voice talking in our heads. Your conclusion is thoughtful, honest and wise. No one can bring David back, but if we can learn from your story — maybe we can reach out to the next "David" in our lives.

Stereotype

Who am I?

Who am I to the world,
or to the people in it?

Why do adults of higher standards
— grimace?

Am I a menace to society?

Why is it my appearance
that affects people's opinion?

What is the definition of potential?

Why is it my thuggish background
that offends you?

Am I not eligible for college?

Why is it my explanations
are nonsense?

Is it because of my dreadlocks
that I am considered

a person of deficiency with low expectations?

Am I not meant

to appear at a graduation?

Does it seem that my infatuation
and interest, are only in
drugs, fast cars and turfs?

Do you not understand that my goals
are related to education?

Elevation is my inspiration,
but still I'm stereotyped

by people who are no different from me.

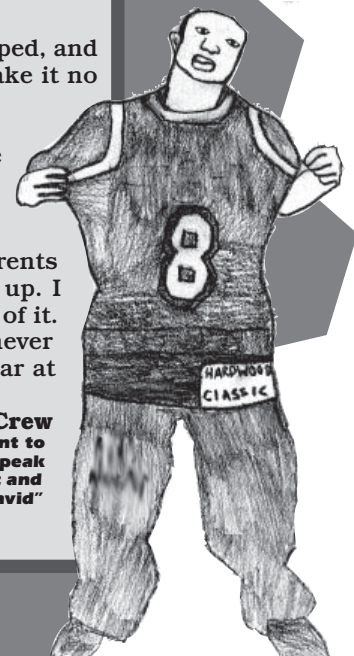
Yet I'll prove them wrong.

I shall be prosperous.

"Impossible is nothing."

-Stunna Boy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The eloquence of your pen comes again this week with a message that speaks volumes about your potential to succeed if you can manage to escape the drugs and quick-fix creed of the street. We don't say this to diss you or dismiss you, 'cause your gifts inspire high expectations. You can prove your critics wrong about you, but not about drugs, too — 'cause drugs will bring down the brightest and the best, and square-thugs end up like all the rest who just couldn't stand the stress of a drug-free mental clarity that will all but guarantee prosperity to one as gifted as you! Stunna Boy, put down the stunnas and be a front-runner — impossible is nothing to you!



-Traviesa, 150 Crew



Acidic part two

Not crazy, not crazy, not crazy, not crazy
Whispers in my ear
Thank God I'm not living
Right now
It is too hot!
I want to go in the dark
The darkness
Where it is cold with frost
On the tip of my nose, my fingers
Crystallized Breathing
Isn't it weird
How people on acid
Jump off buildings
Trying to fly?
Stand in front of a train
Feel acidic power
Bubbling inside
Hold your palm up, God-like
And you can stop the train
How could people do that stuff?
They're crazy
"Dude, we're on acid
Let's jump out the windows!"
Where it's dark and cold
I don't want to die
Gone forever
But the best word for my desire
Is death itself
I'm not crazy, I'm dreaming
I can fly in my dreams, right?
Red, black, blue, white
Red, black, blue, white
Knock out the window with one blow
And it falls to the ground in slow motion
Landing plushy on the grass
Seven stories below
I climb on the sill
And as I lean forward
Two pale vampire hands
Grab my shirt and pull me back
As I tumble back onto the couch
Laughing that tinkling laughter
Again and even when it stops
It continues in my head
I gaze at the TV screen
My pupils big as saucers
I see a boy sitting on a rock
A frozen DVD menu
But, yet, it's moving, pulsing
Changing colors
I fill with sadness as I realize
That I am the only one who sees this
Instead of feeling special, I feel wrong
Make this high leave me
I just want to be normal
Normal? You'll never return to reality
You'll be stuck in this dream forever
No longer the "fun trip!"
Help me; I'm scared!
I try to scream, but no sound comes out
I turn to my doe-eyed love
And breathe a "Help me!"

And it flows out of my mouth
The words slipping through clenched teeth
As pink and green light
Then I feel a cold slap
Shock my sweating face
I begin to cry
And when I open my eyes
I'm underwater
An ocean of sunshine and moonshine
I wave my hand in front of me
Searching for the sun, water
It ripples, but I feel nothing
But there are fifty fingers now
Tracers dancing in my deceiving vision
And not one of them is wet
Don't call the cops
I swear I'll be good
Baby, don't bite me
Look, no pain!
Another slap
As I see my atoms sprinkle
In all directions
Still, my skin feels so good
Tan velvet, tingling, trembling
At every touch, smell, sound
Finally Sam
They are tired of toying
With my emotions, with my body
Raped of my dignity
For the last time that night
I drift into the dark world
Of my own thoughts
Sitting, staring
At that DVD menu
Still not frozen
The way it should be
I turn to look at my doe-eyed angel
I thought he was an angel
Sleeping, he looks like a vampire
Arms crossed across his chest
White or silver skin pulsing
His skin is breathing
Ooh, my God, the couch is breathing
Then I am standing in the bathroom
Wondering how I got there
All recollection lost
I feel so dirty
I need to get out of here
To leave this dirty skin, this body
For the first time, I look in the mirror
Not only do I have giant cartoon pupils
But, as I stare, my eyes seem to grow bigger, too
Until they fill my head
When they return to normal
My head shrinks to a deflated balloon
I look into my oversized eyes
And begin to cry

-The Antichrist, Marin

From The Beat: Your depiction of the hallucinations, paranoia, distortions of a hallucinogen is amazing. The longing to "come down" but knowing that going back to "normal" may not solve anything either is so accurate and scary. Do you think it's self-destructive to use drugs? Do you think crystal, ecstasy, crack cocaine can alter your personality or your neurology permanently? If you were to be released today, would you go back to using drugs, or do you think you'd better get to know, appreciate and learn to be grateful for life without drugs?

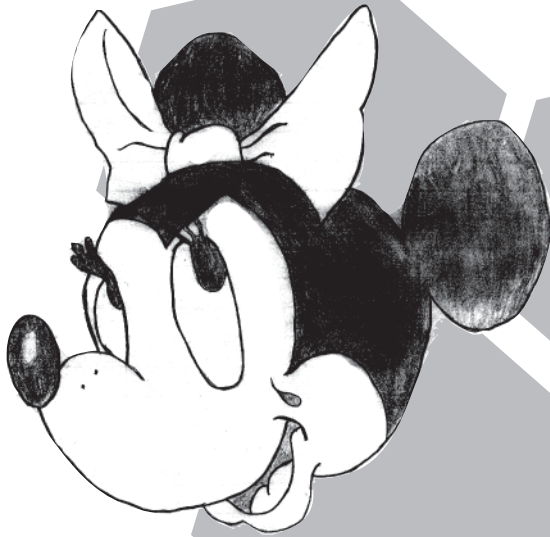


I Try

I try to be cool with people and all they do is
provoke me and do stupid shhh
I try to have a family with my foster parents,
but it never works out.
I try to keep sadness in me and never show it.
I try to be happy, but I can't
I try hard in school, but all they do is talk shhh
about my work
I try to have everything under control, but I can't
I try asking my parents if I could do sports.
They say "no."
I try not to get in trouble, but it don't work.
I try to have a simple life, but I can't.
I try asking everyone what I am doing wrong. They
just say "We don't know"
I try to stay home, but I cannot
I try not to do drugs, but I can't, because that's me,
trying not to feel pain
I try, try, try, try...

-Shorty, Marin

From The Beat: Your writing is wonderful, thoughtful and sad. We can totally feel the pain seeping from the pen you're writing from. You are great at writing straight from your heart. Why do your parents object to your playing sports? Don't worry about showing your sadness. Since that's how you're feeling, what's wrong with showing it? What else helps stop your pain besides drugs? Do you have friends on the outs? What do you like to do, that makes you happy? What do you do that you do correctly?



**When you're in your
room, all you do is
think. We all know
that, but what you
think about is the
important part.**

MY culture makes MY Life Hard

My culture has made my life a little more difficult in a lot of ways. When most people look at me, they think I'm a terrorist. They ask me the stupidest questions. Possibly like, do I know Osama Bin Laden, or ask if I can try to make a bomb threat so we can get out of here. I just look at them and wonder "what the hell is wrong with this person?"

My culture is very strict in a lot of ways. Sometimes people make fun of my culture or the Kufe I wear. (Kufe is a religious hat that Muslim's wear.) But their words don't hurt this soldier, so I just ignore them and pray for them to become more educated about my religion.

My culture has stopped me from seizing a lot of opportunities. In my culture you're not allowed to date, and staying out is really not good. In my culture clothing is not really that important, but I just dress fly for the fun of it.

-Abbas, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It would be annoying to have to put up with those comments but I guess you can forgive them for their ignorance and teach them about your culture if their willing to learn. Did you ever feel that you were rebelling against your cultures rules? That is common among other religions and cultures, especially in America.

They Told Us

They told us not to do it so we do it.
If they told us to kill then we wouldn't kill
If they told us to sell drugs then we won't do it
If they told us to not go to school we will go to school
If they told us to do bad then we will do good
If they told us to do drugs we wouldn't do it
If they told us to do wrong then we would do right
Why I say if they told us to do bad we will do good?
Because all they told us was to do good, and all we did was bad.

-Lil' Dakota B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We think this is deeper than you know. Have you ever heard of "reverse psychology"? That's exactly what you have described in this tight little poem. The great writer and humorist, Mark Twain, wrote that God made a mistake when he told Adam and Eve not to eat the forbidden fruit from the Tree of Knowledge, because once he told them that, then that's all they wanted to do. We're not sure it's as easy as that, but there's more to this than meets the eye.

Experiences That Cause You To Change

There's an experience that I'm never going to forget, which is coming to YGC. I guess God does work in mysterious ways, Why I say that is because during my stay at YGC there's been nothing but drama on the outs.

One thing that makes me think a lot is that my closest homie got shot and killed. Damn! A simple drive-by caused this. And the sad part was that it wasn't even in the 'hood, I know I would have been there right next to him. That bullet could have hit me, but I was in YGC.

When you're in your room, all you do is think. We all know that, but what you think about is the important part. What I do is just reminisce. "Damn! What was I thinking doing what I was doing? Fighting over a color that is never going to be mine, a 'hood I don't own!"

-Cobs B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Is there any other way to be protected from the violence of the streets short of being locked up? We agree that thinking is the most important thing you can do in the Hall. So, where do your thoughts take you? How will your thinking translate into action when you are free? Will you be able to remember the thoughts you had, and use them to your own benefit?



It Started Like This & Ended Like This

Well, as a child, I never had many things. It was kind of hard for me growing up.

Well, it started like this: As a baby, I was okay until I got to be three, and after that I don't know what happened. All I know is that things had gotten worse, and my mom was homeless — and then it was like my young life ended.

We were going from here to there, from shelter to friends to our own; and we never really had stable housing. Then things got a little better. We kept a home for two years, but in that home things got bad again. I started getting molested, until I got to eight years old.

Then things went back to being unstable again. Then I went to a shelter for a while. And finally we moved to our own spot for some months. That's when I saw my mom kill her boyfriend, when I was twelve years old. So that caused problems with our living there. So we went to a motel for a while.

Then I got raped and things went from bad to worse. I found out my mom was on drugs, and then came CPS (Children's Protective Services) problems — and then it was me being on my own and raising myself plus my little sister.

Then I was on my own. I was homeless and on my own, sleeping under bridges, going from here to there. At fifteen years of age, eating out of garbage cans, and things like that.

Then it was really a problem with the Hall, 'cause I tried prostitution and selling drugs to survive. So I thought it was all my fault, but it wasn't. And I thought it was the end, but it was really the beginning. And it ended like this, now.

-Laqulisha, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your story is one of struggle, from beginning to end, or to this end which, as you say, is a new beginning, a new struggle. But in the past you struggled merely to survive. Now you can begin the struggle to succeed, to get your life right so that as an adult you never need return to the suffering in your past — none of which was your fault! You did not deserve what happened to you as a child, nor did you choose the life you were born into. Now you are beginning to reach an age where you can think about making a life for yourself. Take it one step at a time, one day at time. Just to have survived to this point, young lady, makes you a shero! Keep telling your story, it's just beginning. What are your dreams for the future? What are your goals?

First Love

my first love was so sweet
i miss her love
i feel so weak
it feels like an acute sickness
everybody else
tried to be in our business
i hate the fact
that she left me
is this forever
it cannot be
so you see
my first love makes me feel
a lot of misery
she was so pleasant
no cause
but makes me feel
like a peasant
seeing her everyday
makes me feel sick
pleasure fills the hatred
can't do nothing
everything feels tainted
looking at her life
paints me a picture
first loves are a pain
she shows me insights
that keep me sane
she still loves me
but she's with her boyfriend
lookin' back on time with love
seeing how it was spent
my first love and only true love
still there for me
she feels me
but don't wanna deal with me

-Pastor J-Wizzle, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Of course you feel pain, but don't let the desire to be in control transform your pain to anger and hate. If her love is true, all you need do — is be patient. Calm yourself. Wait. But we feel what you're saying, and the way you say it is amazing.

Music

My body feels the bass, my head starts to move up and down
I get stuck on the beat carefully listening to every sound
Energy rushes through my veins, I can't stop my every motion
Sweat drenches my skin making it slippery acting like lotion
But at time I contemplate what the singer/rapper is really crying
The songs hits my heart leaving me hypnotized by reality, so on my bed I'm just lying
When I hear anybody cuss I know they're letting out the suffering they've been through
I cuss when I am angry or full of fear, but to society that's nothing new
They look at you in disgust saying, "They're not brought up the way they used to"
Back to music to what really helps me pass up my time
Keeps my poems flowing because it gives me back my imagination so it's easier to rhyme
Without music I don't know how we would entertain ourselves
It would be dull and boring like the life of books just sitting on shelves
Music helps me escape my mindset of living between these four white walls
I know this is true for most of the juvie halls
Like a song says, "Let the music heal your soul
Let the music take control, let the music give you the power to move any mountain"
I have to say one thing right before I'm gone
"Let the music live forever, let the music live on"

-Frenchy, San Mateo

From The Beat: In this wonderful piece, you've managed to make your own music! What we love about this piece, Frenchy, besides your ability with words, is that few Beat writers have dealt with the subject of music, though we know it must be the most universal art form that connects everyone in the Hall (and out). Do you like all kinds of music, or just rap? Do you sing (even in the shower)? Why do you think music has the power it has to calm the soul, to inspire, to entertain, to let you escape to a different place?

**Music
helps me
escape my
mindset
of living
between
these four
white
walls**



Shooting Experience

An experience that changed my life was shooting a gun for the first time. I remember it was 1998. Me and my patnas were behind Elmhurst Junior High.

My boy got his first pistol from his older brother. I remember it was a black-and-chrome forty-five Roger. He was scared to let it off, so I was like, "Screw it! Give it to me." It was like around eleven thirty or eleven forty-five, when I pulled the trigger.

It all happened so fast. I remember just seeing a quick flash coming out the chamber! Hearing that loud pop! Then the shell dropping not even a second after I fired the gun.

We were all standing there stuck, like "I can't believe I did that!" The power of the gun was tremendous! I felt so powerful — and happy. The next day, I went to school and told about it.

-Gunner, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You describe the moment and your experience of it, vividly. That feeling of power can make you giddy, even, as you say, happy, for a minute or a day or a week. But in the end, the power of a gun is pure destruction, and it will destroy your world. You're older now. Are you wiser? Have you found enough power in you to put down the gun and its curse?

Being In Here Makes Me Want Love

I wanna fall in love
Being in here makes me want love
Before I never wanted to love
It was hit it and leave it
But being in here changed me
Makes me think about life
Life in jail
Makes me think about eveverybody
When I was out there I was known as Lil' Shawn
I was known for having money
Having girls
Having cars at a young age
Now I'm in here
Been here a year
Through the year I've learned what to do
When I get out, I learned who my friends are
How to live

-Lil' Shawn

From The Beat: What is your gameplan once you get out? How have you learned to live in the year you've been incarcerated?

Just Let Go

At this point in time
We can't be more
Not until you decide
To open that door
Maybe you can't find the key
Or maybe it has something to do with me
As I wait on the other side
For you to uncover feelings you hide
Hoping that someday
You'll want to feel
Yet not really knowing
If you ever will
When and if that day comes along
Everything will be right
Instead of all wrong
Out of joy
We will laugh and cry
Our love will go on always
And never die
See there I go wishing and hoping
When what I need to be doing
Is coping
Teaching myself how to deal
Preparing my heart for what isn't real
The time has come
This I know
Now its time
To just let go!

-Ash, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Great poem! What does it mean to just let go? Have you let go? Is your door open? What is it that you need to be coping with? This piece brings up so many questions. What time is it?

To My Unborn Child

Even though I know I'm not there
I keep you in my mind and heart
I think about you everyday
And the reason we're apart
The first day your eyes open
How I wish I could be there
To see you come into this world
And take your first breath of air
But I've made a few mistakes
And surely you will do the same
You gotta learn from the ones you make
For things to ever change
Life is hard when you're down
And you might feel like you're stuck
Just ask the Lord
for the strength to carry on
Keep your head up.
Never let a person tell you that you're weak
if you cry
'Cause there's nothing else to do when it
hurts inside
Just take the bitter with the sweet,
try your best to hold on
'Cause when the tears fall like rain,
the sun will shine before long
Me and mommy ain't as cool
as we used to be
But still my love grows for you
unconditionally
Say your prayers and ask God,
"Please always forgive."
There is nothing you can do
But continue to live
-Brian, Virginia

From The Beat: There are so many daddies in the hall, prison, etc. who can feel your poem. It must be so difficult to not be there for your child when you want to be. It's so important to be a part of your child's life even if you are incarcerated, through letter writing and visits. Being civil with the baby's mom also helps the child. It hurts them to see their parents fight and not get along at all. A child is more likely to be incarcerated if any of their parents are incarcerated, and with enough communication and work, maybe this can be prevented. You can no longer think only about yourself. We wish you the best with your relationship with your child.

Not Giving Up

I feel in my life that you are given opportunities and chances. You should be attentive off these qualities of life and seize them, because in life it's not where you stand in times of comfort and convenience, but where you stand in times of trial and tribulation.

If you realize that you're tired of what's happening, and your life is wrong, then that's your first step. We each have a book of rules and a bag of tools to carve stepping stones or stumbling blocks.

-Lil' Nick B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: When did you realize that you were creating stumbling blocks with your tools, and that you needed to create stepping stones instead? What are some of those tools you write about? How can you sharpen them to advance yourself? Where do you want to be in five years? Ten?

**We each have a book
of rules and a bag
of tools to carve
stepping stones or
stumbling blocks.**



Entering A Life Of Prostitution, Part Three

So yeah, I had to get out of that with Black. It was tearing me apart so I got caught and went to jail in San Francisco, but at the time I had a fake I-D that said I was 21, and I went to the city jail and got sight-and-release.

So the next morning I got out and he had thought that I was still in jail but I had to find new management 'cause right then and there I had a green light put out on me (meaning as any pimp who saw me can strip me and take me) so I had to choose up once again.

So when I got out of jail I went to my big cousin's house, JR. He had lived in Hunters Point, so he knew I got down when I got to his house I told him everything that had happened between me and Black. I told him I wanted out, but I would have to choose up and I didn't want another pimp. But check this out my cousin JR is known, so he got mad respect from them ninjas over there, so he lied and said I was his female and for nobody to mess wit' me. They respected it so my green light was taken off me.

I had been staying wit' him over a month when I was in San Francisco and I saw Black, I guess he had some new girls working out there, so he was chasing me up and down the track when I called JR and he had not answered his cell phone, so I called his baby mama house. He was there, I told him what was going on and before I knew it he was right there jumpin' out of his car and running up on Black. I couldn't hear what they were saying 'cause I had to get in the car. But I guess he told Black it wasn't cool, no more, because when he got back in the car he told me it was all right. That Black wouldn't be messing wit' me anymore and if he did that he would blow his brains out.

So I was safe again I never went back to Oakland tracks 'cause it was too dangerous, plus I liked San Francisco tracks they was more better, you got more money.

But the track was wearing me out, I had to make money 'cause JR was charging me half of the rent, so I did a lil' network and got on line. That went cool for a while then I came up on a trick who owned a strip club downtown called "Girls, Girls, Girls" and he told me he liked my style and he would hire me if I came down to the club. So I went down and got the job on the spot.

I was making more money than ever and I had moved out of my cousin's house and me and one of the girls at the club got a place together. It was going all cool, stripping was so much fun. I love to dance so why not get paid for it.

I'm not saying that I still wasn't getting down, 'cause every now and then I would take a trick to the back room and break his pockets, but it was cool I didn't have to worry about 5.0 or pimps that much. As a matter of fact one was one of my tricks so it went good, until one night I was on the lower floor dancing, it's two floors in the club, so I'm down there dancing getting my money and guess who I see, yes, Black, he was looking too good. So I went to the back and ask Ed the manager "could I go to the first floor?" He told me "no" because he needed me to go on the stage next after Diamond got off. I was pissed, but I had to get my money.

Black was old news and if he messed wit' me I would just have Tony one of our bouncers throw his ass out. So I went on stage next and he was right there watching me every minute. He reached in his wallet and pulled out a hundred dollar bill and waved it in the air. I was trying my hardest to not look at him but he was right in front of me and I knew if I didn't take that bill my boss would be all up my ass when I got off stage. 'Cause he was right in the back looking at me so I danced my way over to him and grabbed

it without looking at him then he grabbed my hand and pull me down to him and said, "Bitch, you can't get away from me you belong to me forever." I tried to pull away, but he wouldn't let me go, he had a tight grip on me. Then Tony came over and warned him to let me go before he kicked his ass. He let me go and walked off the floor.

I finished my show and called JR. I told him everything, even though I wasn't staying with him anymore he still looked out for me when I was in trouble. I had my own car but I asked him could he pick me up 'cause I knew Black would be waiting on me. I couldn't ask my roommate 'cause she was doing a private party. I wouldn't see her until the next day. I was all by myself.

JR said he had to take his baby mama to the hospital 'cause she was sick but he could have one of his potnas pick me up. I said no because I hated them ninjas, they was hell a disrespectful.

I got off at 11:00pm, the club closed at 2:00am. So I waited until the club closed, I had Tony walk me to my car. I didn't see Black but when I got to my apartment and walked in the door all the lights was out. So I went to turn on the light, as soon as I did, I saw Black sitting on the couch wit' a gun in his hand. "It's about time you got home baby, I started to fall asleep," he said.

"What the ... are you doing here? How did you get in here? How did you know where I lived?" I said.

"Don't worry about that, what's wrong baby you don't love me no more!?" he said. I tried to run to the door but I was too slow, he grabbed me and pulled me to the floor. I started to scream and fight he put the gun to my head and told me to shut the hell up before I ended up dead.

I kept screaming, so he put his hand over my mouth but I bit his finger. We were on the floor rolling around fighting. I wasn't winning but I was trying. I kneed him in the dick and ran into my room like a dumb ass, and tried to hop out the window but he caught me by my hair and pulled me to the bed. He put the gun in my mouth and told me he would kill me if I made another sound, so I just laid there.

Then there was a knock at my door. "T baby girl what you doing in there? You got a ninja in there?" It was my roommate, Sugar. I was happy as hell, Black looked at me like bitch you know what to say, so I told her I had a friend over and I would keep down the noise. "Girl don't trip I just came back home to get a change of clothes I will be back tomorrow. You need anything before I leave?" she said.

"Naw girl I'm cool" I told her

"Alright I'm go' call you, have fun bye." Then I heard the door close

A "Good girl, see that wasn't that bad was it" He said, now putting the gun on the bed.

"Please don't hurt me. What do you want? Can you just leave please?" I started to cry.

"Baby girl I ain't go' hurt you. I just wanted to see how my baby was doing," he said smiling.

"I'm okay, now can you leave please?" I said.

"Not yet, the party just started." He said while pulling out some handcuffs out of his back pocket.

So to make a long story short he raped me, I couldn't call 5.0 because I had a warrant out for my arrest for missin' my court date, so I just had to deal with it.

-Fireball, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Fireball, we want to thank you for sharing your terrifying story with us. You've been through so much, way too much for a any teenager. We want to know, what have you learned? How do you feel today about the game? What kind of advice would you give a youngster out there going down the same road you went down? Where is YOUR life going now? Do you have many regrets? Do you feel like a stronger person today? What happens the next time you walk out those doors of the Hall?



Turn My Life Around

When my mother got sent to heaven from a hit and run car crash a little bit over the Richmond Bridge, that left a huge impact on my life. My life changed in bad and good ways.

I tried to take away the pain by doing drugs, such as crystal, etc., mostly the drugs that tweaks da shhh outta me. Two years ago I had this drug-dealing boyfriend and so I had access to crystal any time I wanted. We weren't that serious back then. I'm still with him now, ever since I got caught up with the system. I've been trying to get him to quit and I gave him eight months 'til my birthday. He has to quit smokin' that shhhh.

The date is August 28th. He really changed me. We started to get serious near November. He got me more mature and to think highly about myself. I used to mess with other people, but he did his thang somehow and got me stuck in love wit' him. My father hates him, though. It's because he's Latino. I love you!

-Lil' Mami, Marin

From The Beat: You don't mention if you've quit using crystal, yourself. If you have, can you still be around a boyfriend who smokes and not be tempted to smoke yourself? In which ways did the loss of your mother change you? How do you deal with the pain? Over all, do you think your man is a good influence on you? Does he encourage you to go to school, get a job and get your life straight? We hope you make the right choices with your life.

Drugs

Drugs make me feel good all the time

Drugs could kill me, but I don't care

Drugs are my best friends, 'cause they take my pain away

Drugs could get you in a bad place

Drugs, drugs, drugs, drugs, drugs

Drugs could make you go crazy

Drugs take you nowhere but here

Drugs are sold in the streets

Drugs keep you out of school

Drugs just get you in trouble

Drugs keep you out of your homes

Drugs, drugs, drugs, drugs, drugs

-Shorty, Marin

From The Beat: Drugs may make you feel good all the time, but we can tell from what else you wrote in this poem that you know these drugs are also destroying you. No one knows why some things, like drugs, which seem to help the pain, also cause it. Now that you're in Juvy and can't get to drugs, how are you holding up? How do you deal with your pain and sadness in there? Can you slowly build up your life without drugs, so that once you're free, you can stay drug-free?

I Am A Man

My parents don't trip really about who I go out with; my parents aren't like that. I mean you got to find someone in life. I am a man, a man, a king, who wants to be good to a woman, a queen. I really don't think parents should be happy about who their kids go out or marry, as long as their kid is happy.

I am a man who believes that a parent should know the background of the person who their kid is dating. This man might be an in-and-out juvenile, or a drug addict. I am just talkin' about the men. I am a man who believes the women are the same. Drugs, unhappiness, etc., is what breaks people's relationship. I am a man who had to experience a fifteen-year-relationship go away between my two parents. I am a man who lives at home with his mother, because my father was not there. I am a man.

-Josh, Marin

From The Beat: It can really hurt when your parents split up. Sometimes it feels like you're splitting in two. Do you ever get to see your dad? Do you know where he is? Can you go visit him when you get out? Do you introduce ladies you go out with to your mom? When it comes time for you to choose a wife and have kids, you sound like you'll be a loving husband and father.

I Can't Believe

I can't believe... anything. Not any more. I can't believe I came here. I can't believe I'm still here. I can't believe what I see when I look around me. The faces. So beautiful, so lost. So innocent and young. So full of potential, but at the same time, so empty of hope.

And I can't believe how many people I've seen come through here, time and time again. I can't believe that these strong, ambitious people are thrown out of here, only to come right back. But worst of all, I can't believe I'm one of them.

But I am, and realizing that, I have to ask, why? Why am I here so much, and why do I know I'll be back? I wish I could say. I wish I could find these answers, and I wish I could share them with all of you. But I have no answers. And I can't believe it.

So, please, all of you, ask yourselves, "Why?" Find the answers, because until we find them, we're just going to keep making the same mistakes. And no one wants to see those same mistakes made, over and over.

-Conrad, Marin

From The Beat: Do you keep coming back for the same mistakes? When you're about to commit whatever you do to get busted, what goes through your mind? Does a voice override your warning and tell you to go ahead and do it? What if you say to yourself, "nothing is worth my freedom"?

My Old Life

Before I came in here, I had no recollection of my childhood. Maybe I didn't want to remember. I was real poor and lived in the inner city of Philadelphia. I was the only little White girl in a school of Blacks. I lived there until I was ten years old.

Drugs were unknown to me, but violence was not. I had a best friend and was always at his house. Him and his sisters would be whooped with a belt when they were bad. I watched, fearing the time I'd be caught in a lie. I started to get into fights. My friend, TJ, my sister and I would find people on our block.

One day we messed with the wrong person. I was jumped and stabbed in the stomach. I didn't care much; I just realized I didn't want to live that way anymore. Even then, I didn't care if anything happened to me. I was fearless.

The day before I moved, my TJ, my love, was jumped. He got hurt pretty bad. I was so angry, I wanted to kill all of them, but I couldn't do anything about it. The next day I moved to Chicago, eventually moving to San Francisco, then to different parts of Marin. Then I started life over.

-The Lost Child, Marin

From The Beat: You have been through it. It must have been hard to start over again so many times, moving from city to city! Do you think you were indifferent to getting stabbed because you were fearless or depressed? Do you think your old life will always have an affect on you? Why or why not? How does your family play a role in your life? If you have some close friends, maybe you won't feel so lost and lonely!

I started life over.



My Blessin'

Life's a... and then you die
But why?
Why every day we got to cry?
People be telling you to dry your eye
But those people don't feel the way I feel
They don't have the desire to die
The worst thing you can do in life
Is not even try
So we got to keep on going
Until the day we reach the sky
That's when we could say goodbye
To these days filled with trials and tribulations
New obstacles to overcome
You know what they say
Keep y'all heads up
Don't ever give up
Don't let nobody get you down
Wise words you should live by
And I try
But you know
Sometimes I can't handle all this pain and sorrow
Some days I just wish I could borrow
Somebody else's life
To get a little peace and sanity
So everyone could stop being mad at me
This life we live is challenging
But we got to keep on managing
Every day is worth a try
Every day there's a good feelin' to be chasin'
Enemies to be facin'
People you feel you got to be racin'
Wantin' to come out on top
That desire ain't never gonna stop
Until the day I drop
Dead on the floor
That's when I won't want any more
And I feel that way to the core
And I felt it even more
Since that day my heart tore
Now all the time, tears pour

From these sad eyes
Lord, hear my cries
Help me rise
From my negative ways
After all these days
Of actin' the same
And although I know I'm the one to blame
And that on my shoulders I'll carry the shame
I'm still mad that things had to be this way
To our heavenly Father I pray
For an astonishing change
In my heart
For all this evil to depart
Send an angel to me, please
So I will no longer be alone in the dark
Or in the day
For all my sins I'll pay
To my rey
My Father up in heaven
If all these gloomy days of rain
Can be washed away
So inside I could feel okay
Once again feel sane
With new peace in the brain
For it would be the first time in my life
That things would be all right
But until my prayer is answered
I'll keep waiting
And debating
What decisions to make
Which path in life to take
I'll just kick back and take a break
From stressin'
I can wait, Lord
I'll take this time for restin'
And wishin' for my blessin'

-Lindsey, Marin

From The Beat: You have a nice way of using rhyme! What's causing all your pain and sorrow? Can you just simplify your life, while you're in Juvy, until you can really figure out how to handle what's bothering you? Can you go someone you trust for some help? There's no shame in asking for help when you're confused.

Caught in a booby trap of lies Now I can't escape the truth

Loss, Escape and Lockdown

My experience that has allowed me to change is the experience I'm going through right now. I have learned a lot from the mistakes I've made in my life. My experiences have caused me to act and think differently in a way that I've never thought I could do.

An experience I've never forgotten is when my family decided to leave Afghanistan to go to Pakistan. My dad died during the war, so my mom decided to leave the country. We had to smuggle ourselves to Pakistan.

The experience I've received right now has changed me greatly, and everyday I thank Allah for letting me change my life. Peace out!

-Abbas, 150 Crew

From The Beat: These are tragic experiences you have faced but you are handling them as well as you could. Have you come to terms with your father's death and the trauma of fleeing your country? How exactly did your experiences make you think and act differently?

I remember my first lock-up. I'd been on dope for seven days already.

MY first day

I remember my first lock-up. I'd been on dope for seven days already. I was twacked out of my mind, and I had a warrant out for my arrest because I didn't go to court for burglary.

That day I decided I was gonna pack at least 5-6 10-12 hitter bowls and just pop an eighth of 'shrooms. Well, I did that but added bud, a drop of acid, 2 x's, and one soma and alcohol. I was so messed up. The cops came and my first reaction was to run, but couldn't move my body. I couldn't see straight. I tried walking and fell and hit my head on the coffee table.

I remember hitting the floor and hearing someone say call 911. They took me to the hospital and pumped some stuff through my nose to make me throw up.

My heart stopped fifteen seconds before I got to the hospital. I had overdosed. I woke up a day later in a hospital with an IV in my arm and police and my mom hovering over me. I was there for one more day, then they took me in. I felt scared and lonely. I cried and cried, not knowing why.

Locked behind a door, brick walls, small mattress, people checking on me every five minutes, the thought goes through your head, oh my god, this is my life that will never change.

-Desiree, San Luis Obispo

From The Beat: We're so glad the police rushed you to the hospital and that you're still with us today. Would you say this is when you hit rock bottom? Do you think you were deliberately trying to overdose? If so, why? Do you think you will ever go back to that point again in your life? Do you still think that your life will never change? Why or why not? What can you do, or what do you do to move on from that low point?

if i ONLY knew

Surrounded by people
Amongst my peers I'm alone
Living in a house
But I can't wait to go home
A face full of smiles
Yet a soul swallowed by sorrow
Yesterday I couldn't wait
Now I'm scared of tomorrow
Caught in a booby trap of lies
Now I can't escape the truth
I keep pretending to be me
Just like you

-Michael, San Luis Obispo

From The Beat: Why do you have to pretend? Why can't you be you? What does it take to face the truth and accept it? Now that you've had to accept the truth, will life be any better, or is it easier to live the lie?



it's not a joke

Why do you laugh
as if were a joke
Drink a little booze
do a line of coke
Roll a fatty
maybe two
Use inhalants
sniff some glue
Parties is what started it all
I'm too good; I'll never fall
Use each day of the week
Some hits of marijuana
a bowl of tweak
I hit rock bottom
and fell to my knees
I never thought I would have this disease
God, please change my ways
I beg to live just one more day
I look in the mirror,
what do I see?
A drug addict staring back at me

-Donica, San Luis Obispo

From The Beat: We're glad to hear you're trying to change your ways and sober up. There are lots of ways for people to get sober. Some people rely on support from family and friends, some people have to stay away from family and friends, and some people start new activities and programs to keep their mind busy. How are you going to stay sober?

Livin' In The Dark

Pitch black skies is all I see,
if it's meant to be, why does it always rain on me?
Truthfully, at an early age, was taught to ride the back
livin' in the dark so all I saw was black
Tryin' to live out dreams, but all I have is nightmares
so I look at the stars and hope to see someone who cares
Couldn't stay nowhere,
hated to be inside my skin
To know where you're going
you gotta know where you been
In a fight for my life and they call it assault,
but why am I with the heart that don't bleed if it's my fault?
I look up to you Lord and start wishin',
but sometimes I feel all you do for me is listen
But I thank you for teaching me all you know
You taught me that it was dark because I had my eyes closed.

-Chad, San Luis Obispo

From The Beat: Are your eyes open now? What do you see now that you didn't see before? We hope you'll continue to have clear sight when you're released.

My Great Grandma

If I could bring one person back it would be my great grandma because I've never got to see her and I never got to say goodbye.

I would tell her that I love her and miss her even though I don't know her. I would tell her that I need her help. I need someone to love me, to help me with my problems, to have someone there for me, and not to choose someone else over me. Well, that's it, Beat.

-Ashlee, San Luis Obispo

From The Beat: What a beautiful but sad piece. Has anyone ever given you the kind of love you're looking for? We so hope you'll find it someday, and that in the meantime, you'll be able to treat yourself with unconditional love.

Anger At The System

I was locked in a system
Of impossible "cures"
Punishments that didn't pertain
to me
Personally, I wanted to hurt
Every single one of them
Screaming, "I hate you!"
At anything
Finding expression through
Thoughts and writing
Was not enough
So it was taken out
With violence
I've been in fights for no real
reason
'Cept being enraged at the world
Society in general
Wanting to cause a ripple
In the oceanic America

Maybe this is anger
Carried over from childhood
This is my way of revenge
On the world
From what people used to do to
me
Maybe they deserved it
But when will you people learn
Never to put drugs in the hands
Of someone who knows
How to use her weapons

-The Antichrist, Marin

From The Beat: What happened to you, when you were a child that makes you so angry? Who are you angry at? Is there any way to make things right? Or are your scars still painful and too deep? When you write about revenge, are you seeking revenge on the people who hurt you, or on the world in general? How does your revenge make you feel? Is your revenge hurting you, as well as your victims? What do you do on the outs, that has nothing to do with your pain?

Having Kids Changed My Life

The experience that made me change and act older was when my baby mama came to my house and told me that we were having kids, not one, but two. My heart turned warm because I never thought that I would be having kids. It made a big impact in my life because I got to be a man now and step up.

In my little childhood life, my father was never there for me, but I'm gon' take care of mines and that's on the real.

Now I'm going to CYA for eighteen months, so I won't be able to see my kids born in July, but it's cool because when I get out I'm going to play with my kids all day and all night.

My birthday is on the eighteenth, so I got to start doing things differently I don't want to end up in that adult system because I got kids to live for.

So to The Beat readers, I read ya when I read ya, and I see ya when I see ya.

-Big Kenny Ken, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You are handling this like a man! This is your plan, make it a reality. There are going to be so many obstacles to your goals, bad things may catch up from your past, you will be tested... but you got twins to motivate you! Find a discipline practice. An example is making up one sentence, like a prayer, that you will say to yourself over and over again when you are tested. For example, when someone is punking you, tell yourself over and over again until your anger goes away, "Imagine my children's sad eyes looking for their daddy — me." You want to be there for them so you will be humble, intelligent and strong.

What to think

Dang, I think about so much shhh when my PO puts the cuffs on. The worst drive ever is the drive to Juvenile Hall.

I live in SLO County. I've been in JSC eighteen times, and every drive gets worse every time.

I think about my dad, how I've disappointed him once again, about my mom and little brother, how they're probably getting used to my collect calls. I think about my friends, how long it will be before I see them?

I think about how I should have smoked my last bowl and cigarette ten minutes ago so I could at least go in stoned.

I think about what staff's working, who's gonna book me in. I think about how much I hate being strip-searched.

I think about who's in there already, all the homies I get to see. I think about what's for lunch, how long it is gonna take before I get cleared to eat up and program.

I think about how sad it is that I'm going back to the Hall again, what's the judge gonna do with me this time.

It's weird I think so much in the cop car, PO car. Why couldn't I think before I violated my probation? That's what I think about most.

-Katie, San Luis Obispo

From The Beat: So what's the answer to your question? It's not easy to think through your choices, but it's necessary. What would make you stop and check yourself before you wreck yourself? And do you have any things that help you deal with your pain besides drugs?



Stuck

Stuck in this life
stuck with my pain
stuck with me
and stuck with my shame
Stuck in this hell
stuck in this jail
stuck in this world
where the man has control
Stuck in my bed
where I think in my head
there's no luck — you're doomed to be stuck
Stuck in this hell
stuck in this jail.

-Hit, San Mateo

From The Beat: There's all different types of stuck here, and for each there is a different way of becoming unstuck. What's the pain you're stuck with? Where does your shame come from? You can claim a share of control away from the man, but in order to do that you have to take the power to make decisions back into your own hands. Stuck in jail — there's not so much you can do about that except to remember what it feels like and resolve not to return.

Life in a six by nine

Life in a six by nine
Plays havoc on your mind
Eatin' away at your soul
You wish your life had rewind
To change the hands of time
Slowly going insane
You think you're going to die
Nobody feels your pain
Tears rollin' out your eyes
Lights flash throughout your window
You stare and get hypnotized
The glare from the pearly white gates
Is so divine
Is your life worth all the money, drugs, and crime?
This is a life in a six by nine
Through the eyes of a confused mind.

-Ramon, Maricopa Durango, Arizona

From The Beat: It's amazing how you can speak such powerful words without even giving the impression that you are going out of your way. It's like your mind is playing out all these great thoughts all the time. We don't think you're confused at all. In fact, you're more insightful than most people we know. Is your life worth dropping all of the insanity of the way you were living on the outs?

If I Get Out Soon

I think I'm going to get out of here on April the ninth, but it is a chance that I won't be going home on the ninth.

But if I do get out of this damn place, I'm not coming back — because I'm going to change my life! It starts with me getting out of the streets, going to school everyday, doing my homework and coming to class on time.

-Matthew, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your simple, clear plan to do better on the outs, is actually one of the most hopeful things we ever published. So few recognize how important little things are, like getting to class on time — important for building good habits and attitude.

good ALL slo county

Dear Beat, Hi, I'm Katie. I'm seventeen years old and I see nothing wrong with weed at all. It's too chill to hate on it.

Anyways, I'm going to the Grizzly Youth Academy Program. Sounds all sophisticated; it's boot camp. But I'm actually really excited. I mean this is my eighteenth time in good ole JSC (Camp Snoopy) and two group homes plus one rehab. I'm so like over letting the screwed up system have control of my life. I'm almost eighteen and I don't want to end up all royally screwed forever. So being the down chick I am, I volunteered to go to camp. I'm gonna get a high school diploma.

I started coming here when I was a young teen. It was weird. I thought JSC would be all strict bullshhh. This place is more like a place for troubled kids who need time to get sober and find their happy thoughts. We get babied here and bomb food. Anyway, I'm so sick of coming to JSC and all the drama.

I'm not trying to be conceited, or maybe I should. I know I'm better than this; I know I'm a good person. I just smoke weed, a lot. OK, and coke, ecstasy, and that dirty meth, but I'll get over it. I'm a straight soldier. Just want to say peace out to all the homies. Keep your heads up.

-Katie, San Luis Obispo

From The Beat: We hope you do succeed at Grizzly, and beat your drug use problem because you know that shhh is gonna keep getting you locked up. Not to mention what it's doing to your health. What is it in your life, or what is it that's not in your life, that makes the drugs so attractive? Think really hard about this and figure out how to add or subtract that stuff from your life, otherwise you may have to experience your thoughts during the 19th and 20th times you get cuffed.

becoming A MOM

I am not a failure I will succeed,
no more snortin' dope, no more smokin' weed.
Time to be a mother and take care of my son,
He shouldn't a been number two, he shoulda been number one
But I know I screwed up,
Missin' birthdays and stuff.
My three year old watchin' mommy,
Walk out locked in cuffs.
I shoulda been more responsible,
I shouldn't have made my son cry,
What caused me to do these things?

I cannot justify.

Shoulda, woulda, coulda, that's all I could speak,
Hopefully through my words to you I could teach.

Dear Lord please help me,

Every night I do pray,

And I love you

And I'm sorry to my dearest son Tre.

-Dianna, Maricopa Durango, Arizona

From The Beat: It's apparent that you've had many struggles in your life. However, the struggle is not what makes us who we are. What makes us who we are is how we handle those struggles. And we think you are taking the first step to handling your struggle in a very constructive way. We envy the strength you've displayed by recognizing how much your son needs you. How will you play a role in his life when you get out? What lessons do you want to teach him? What could you teach him that nobody else could? We wish you the best and can't wait to hear from you when you're out and taking care of your son. Until then, keep us posted.

**if I do get out of this
damn place, I'm not
coming back**



Shot And Killed

I had a experience that is not gonna make me change. My best friend, who is like my brother, got shot and killed on Saturday, and it was gang related and it's not making me change. I want to get them back.

I feel angry, mad — I feel more hate against my rival gang. It's like I don't care what happens to me if I die or go to jail because I just want to get them for what they did.

Dat's how it is in the gang life but it's not making me change. Every time I'm in my room and I think about him, I feel like going crazy. It's just that I can't believe that he's gone. I can't cry. I've been feeling numb, like I have no feeling.

I think about it — my friend got shot and he's dead. It don't hit my head that I need to change 'cause we used to be chilling together every day. What if I was that one that got shot and killed? Sometimes I just feel that I don't care.

Rest in peace to my homie Choco.

-Kasper, San Mateo

From The Beat: We could see the pain in your eyes when you walked into our workshop the other day, and we can feel it in this piece. We completely understand why you're hurting so badly, and we even understand the very human reaction to want to get the people who did it back. The thing is, if you do get them back, you sacrifice your own life as well, and it still won't bring him back. You'll get caught and do serious time, or you'll get caught by your rivals and pay with your life, and it will continue — and he still won't be brought back. We feel for you, Kasper, we truly do — it's tragic that your homie died. Giving up your life for him won't make it any better, it'll just lead to more pain for more people.

How It Feels To Be Me

No one knows how it feels to be me, but if you were in my shoes you would feel all the pain I feel, and maybe then you would understand why I do what I do.

I've disappointed so many people in my life because of things I do, and the places my actions take me to. I've made the wrong choices and now I'm at the end of the rope. I've reached the eighteen point and I've been forced to change.

My mom left me when I was young. Since then every single person I loved has followed her lead, whether it be death or moving somewhere else. I've had so many problems with trying to be loved that once I grew up, I started looking for love in the wrong places. Because of that, I'm in jail, looking back and putting the pieces together.

I ask myself, why do I do the things I do? Because I don't feel as if I'm loved when I really am. I didn't even realize that the person who loves me more than anything else has been living with me my whole life. My father.

So no more looking for love in worthless guys, drugs and unworthy friends. With that, no more jails, no more being someone I'm not. I don't do bad things because I think that they are the right thing to do. I've learned the difference between right and wrong! It's just a way of acting out, a way to bandage the broken heart.

It's hard to be me, to feel what I feel, to even do what I do. I have had a misperception of love my whole life. Now I know exactly what it is and exactly where to find it. At home. At home with my father.

-Ginger, San Mateo

From The Beat: What led you to realize that your father was there for you all along, and that in him you could find the love you'd been searching for everywhere else? Where was he the whole time you were searching in vain? How will you, with the help of your father, break the old habits that you've developed while looking for love? What's going to make it easier to be you?

I sit there with him in my arms as I watch him take his last breath.

Quit Acting Ill Just To Chill

When I was at home
All I did was chill
So I would skip school
And act like I was ill
Everyday I would smoke and steal
Stuff like cars, drugs,
And things that kill
I would carry around
Weapons of steel
So I could show
People that I am real
But it wasn't worth it
Because now I'm locked up
Reminiscing about the things
I did strapped up
I made a mistake
And I'm willing to change
Because it's always
Better than being in a cage
When I get out I'm
Going to get back my trust
I'm going to get my
Respect and do what I must
Quit running away
And man up to my stuff
So before you just want to chill
You better get up and
Quit acting ill.

-Mario, Maricopa Durango, Arizona

From The Beat: Now that you know change is better than staying in a cage, how do you pursue what you want? How will you get money now that you made the conscious decision to stop committing crimes? What is your dream job? If you could tell another youngster what you learned about the consequences of acting ill, what would you say?

What if I was that one that got shot and killed? Sometimes I just feel that I don't care.

AS MY friend dies IN MY ARMS

Me and my homeboy just kickin' it at a park, getting high. I told my homeboy let's go to a homegirl's house 'cause I have a bad feeling about this place, he said no he just wants to stay and smoke.

Then the gangs that live around the park start to gather and a green Civic pulls up and starts shooting. Everyone runs. When the car leaves I run to my homeboy, he got shot six times in the chest, I pick up his head and I look at his face. My tears roll down my face, I tell him to hold on, the ambulance is coming. I sit there with him in my arms as I watch him take his last breath.

I start to ask why him? He didn't do nothing wrong. My tears fall on his face, I got so mad that I could've have killed the other gangbangers. I held him in my arms until the cop and the ambulance took him. I don't want you to feel sorry for me — just take it as a lesson. Don't join a gang, it's a death wish.

-Michael, Maricopa Durango, Arizona

From The Beat: That's an extremely sad story! It makes us wonder why so many of our youth are falling victim to gangs. Have you thought about this dilemma? What are some of the conclusions you came up with? What are some ways communities can assist our young people in finding security without joining a gang?



i ain't the same

I can't stop thinking I got a lot of things in my mind
I feel like I'm going blind
'cause I can't see the fact
that I'm going through all this mess
I must confess I can't take it no more
I got a lot of goals that I want to accomplish
but again I don't know if I'm gonna go to the next level
cause the devil is all upon my face
and it's in every place that I go
and I can't let it go 'cause he don't leave me alone
But I know I'm stronger than him
I can't let him put me down
that's why I keep standing on my feet
with my head up high
There's times that I just want to fly
to the sky and never come back
I tell the Lord
please help me, don't leave me by myself
and stop me from coming back to jail hell
I'm about to fall
I can't tell nobody
'cause they don't know what I'm going through
only you, Father, you know my heart
Lord take this away from me
I feel my heart beat fast and slow at the same time
and it's making me go crazy
I just want to yell and get everything out of me
I want to hurt and make females feel what I feel
'cause that's how Mona been doing it for a long time
But that's over and through
I ain't the same
'cause Jesus Christ helped me get over it
like a true female that I am
But again I keep standing tall like a soulja
and staying up with my head up high.
Alrato.

-Mona, San Mateo

From The Beat: Damn, you really stepped up with this piece. How is it that you have been able to make the changes you talk about in this piece? How do you keep yourself from flashing on those who get on your nerves while you're locked up? How has Jesus helped you to help yourself? How will you keep the lessons you've learned at the front of your mind when you face the new challenges of returning to the outs? Yell and scream on paper — the pen and paper will let you get it all out.

An Experience That Made Me Change

When I got booked in Hillcrest, I wasn't really trippin' about my time being here. Weeks after, I realized that I was going to be somewhere else than Hillcrest if I got caught again. It was going to be the Y or County if I was going back.

I remember when my older brother was locked up in County. He told me how he was locked up for twenty-three hours a day, and havin' a lot of cold meals a day. He used to tell me that he always hated it and he would say he would never go back.

Right now I feel like I'm kinda following my brother's old habits, like getting locked and getting involved with drugs. About a month ago I realized that it would totally be another ball game if I was caught up with the fuzz, and this experience of being locked up flipped my old ways and had made me wanna change.

-Six, San Mateo

From The Beat: It amazing that you're able to take a step back and not only look at where your actions are taking you, but at the path your brother walked before you. The question is what you're going to be willing to give up in order to avoid the fate that you see awaiting you? What's it going to take to flip your ways?

Loneliness

Hurting inside
wanting to hide
These feelings are old
ones that turn hearts cold
Loneliness deceives the brain
that we need someone to maintain
Well, all I got is this pen
my one and only true friend
It listens to me as I speak
writes down what my mind leaks
In the depths of my soul
I'm the one with control
I make the plans for my life
and for so long these emotions I had to fight
Dealing with the hurt
thought things couldn't get worse
No suicide thoughts
but included myself in wars that gangs fought
Different to the eyes of society
just because I'm me
But I'm so alone
and sometimes I walk like a drone
Life goes on, so I keep walking
this pen writing because I keep talking

-Aok, San Mateo

From The Beat: Your words are stunning, and the way you're able to use the pen as a light that shines on what's deep inside is powerful. The loneliness that so many feel is certainly made worse by incarceration, but it's clear that you are coming to know yourself in ways that will enable you to deal with your loneliness constructively. How will you exert control of your life this time around? What have you learned about yourself that will enable you to get through the problems that have brought you down repeatedly in the

Gotta Change

Minimize the hate
be prepared for my fate
What's my destiny?
What lies ahead of me?
Questions for miles to come
wanna stop 'em 'cause I'm done
I'm being pressured to change
and I feel as if this world's insane
I'm addicted to this life
the ghetto and strife
Can't help that I love this game
can't help I wanna stay the same
Just change my mentality
and realize the reality
I'm not going to live corrupt
don't wanna keep being a mess up
Torn between two worlds
like a tornado, my brain's in swirl
There is a solution to this problem
and for the record, society — can't blame 'em
It's me, the one that is to blame
just because it's so hard I don't wanna change

-Aok, San Mateo

From The Beat: Yeah, it's hard to change, but is doing time easy? It seems that you're left with two tough scenarios from which to choose — one in which you go back to the life you love, trying to dodge the inevitable until you're at County or in the Pen going through exactly what you're going through right now, feeling the same way you feel right now; the other in which you seize the opportunity you have based on your knowledge of yourself and the circumstances you know how to avoid, and you make the sacrifices you know you need to make, and you put in the hard work necessary to develop a new set of habits. Which way are you going to walk?



RUN OVER

I remember when some rival gang members ran me over with a car. It was like five years ago.

Me and like ten other homies were kicking it in the alley one Saturday morning. All my homeboys were drinking except for me. All of a sudden my homeboy runs into the alley and we see him hella sweating. We tell him what happened. He told us, "There's five rivals in the DMV, they tried to jump me!"

We all ran over except for my cousin because his PO showed up. Me and my homeboy were the first to get to the DMV. We were throwing it down. All of a sudden I see homeboys with chains and sticks and start beating on them. I chased one of them that gave me a cheap shot.

All I remember was I heard a car burning tires. I turned around and that's when it hit me. I just seen all black, and next thing I know I'm in the hospital. My mom and sister are there, and hella police. I couldn't remember anything for a couple of weeks. My head hit the windshield. Every time I cross the street I get scared and always look both ways.

-Pelon, San Mateo

From The Beat: What a terrifying story — it's no wonder you trip when you cross the streets. We can understand the anger you must feel at those who did this to you, but the more obvious question that comes to mind is why continue down this path when you've already come so close to death? A near death experience, incarceration — you've been through enough for a whole life, and you're still in your teens. It's one thing to feel anger and hate, but it's another to let it consume you. Is there a way to step up and move on?

Learning A Lesson

I learned my lesson when I came to jail. Now I am changing for the better.

Now I'm going to school every day, and doing my work. I participate in unit programs like Mr. Brown's essays, yoga, IMA, and I go to church.

People will see a new man. I have turned my life around.

-Grinch, San Mateo

From The Beat: We are behind you all the way, Grinch! If you keep doing good, coming to the Hall will soon be nothing more than a bad memory.

experiences that made me change

There was many experiences in my life that probably put changes in my life. The time when I had my first fight put a change on me by making me realize that if you get into an argument most of the time a fight is going to occur.

You're not just going to let someone talk to you any kind of way, or especially clown you in front of a group of older guys, because that's when you really have to put up for when you stand for in my neighborhood. This is one of the main reasons why I got in so many fights.

The fights could have been something little, but if you guys are arguing around older kids in higher grades that's going to give you the motivation to fight. If not, you're going to be known as a little street punk to them. You're not going to get treated fairly because in their eyes they don't want to be by a scary youngsta.

You reap what you sow

So don't blame your 'hood, your town, the cops, your mothers

Now I'm recognized by others and respected, or had fear from others. When the older guys in the higher grades get into an argument with the young classes, they would really come get me and I couldn't back down or else they wouldn't look at me the same.

This is where my life was leading me without me even knowing it.

-Kool Nut, San Mateo

From The Beat: What happens to those kids who don't fight? What happens to the youngsters who get that reputation as "a little street punk"? We ask because we wonder if making your reputation at the cost of your freedom is worth it. We know that you will answer that it is worth it, but have you considered all the possible consequences? Is it better to be thought of as weak (or not to be thought of at all) and keep your liberty, or is it better to be considered strong, but give the system the opportunity to turn you into their slave? Are there any other possible choices besides these two? Do you ever think back on that honor roll student that was you, and wish things had not taken the turn they did?

When I Fall In Love Again . . .

We're going to melt around each other
stop being humans
and become lovers

Our love will be in the air
endless passion in our stare
He will be my shelter, my refuge
someone I can belong to
when he's in pain, I'll cry
and if he's in trouble, I'll ride

No one runs this love
we stand side by side
he'll nurture my body
and caress my heart
he's my end and start

Be in love with my family
and a friend to my friends
a father to my kids

my fantasy so I won't have to pretend

We'll laugh and smile
and cry once in a while
get in fights

but he'll never hit

just buy me flowers and beg a bit

With no words

I can talk to him

and he to me

we know each other's

pain that no one sees

But I've got him

and he's got me

that's all we'll ever need

He'll love my bad habits

like talking in my sleep

he'll cuddle up and lay beside me

He'll understand me

'cause he's the only man for me

and even more important

he feels the same about me

When I fall in love again

this is how it will be!

One sweet day . . .

-Broken Glass, San Mateo

From The Beat: What a beautiful, idealistic vision — even the fights you mention are written about as if through rose-colored glasses. Even the sweetest loves contain their own struggles. What is it going to take to create a healthy, loving relationship? How will you determine if the next man is worthy of your love? How will you demand to be treated? What lessons will you carry with you from past experience?

**You reap
what you
sow**

**So don't
blame your
'hood, your
town, the
cops, your
mothers**



from ignorance to enlightenment

I've experienced a huge case of culture shock. I was raised by my mother. My father died when I was nine, so I attached myself to older people I met.

I thought I was lucky as a young teenager to be accepted by 30-year-old skinheads. I got all into that lifestyle, and so I could not handle being in such a diverse world we live in.

So I dropped out of school at 9th grade, a dumb decision fueled by drugs and hate. I got tired of always being angry and locked up so I looked deeper in myself to figure out the reasons why this happened. Now I'm making steps towards a happier educated way of living.

-X Skin, San Mateo

From The Beat: We have great admiration for anyone who is able to question the values, the biases, the prejudices and the belief systems they were taught. Most of us simply accept what we're told, and hold onto it tightly. We are afraid to let our ignorance go, because there is something a little scary about opening our minds to a larger world of ideas, cultures, people, etc. Questioning what you've been taught is the beginning of wisdom, George, and our judgment about you is that the sky's the limit! The fact that you dropped out of the school in the 9th grade makes your road more difficult, but difficulty is something you've demonstrated you can overcome.

Blamin' No One

Who's to blame for my action

No one, I'm in control of my reactions

The love I got is more of a passion

No matter what happens

Day after day I know what I'm in

Don't never get wrong, I'm doing it to the end

I might calm down at one point of time

But by all means I will stay being about mines

This is the only time you'll see me release this information on lines

You should do this and that

Wise up, don't fall in these traps (jail)

Change your ways

I can't stop, won't stop, that's considered betray

My routine will never decay

Even though the hard bed is where I lay

I will always stay the same mentality no matter what anybody say

-Bolvnian, San Mateo

From The Beat: We read mixed messages in your poem. While you swear you will never change your mentality, you also say you may calm down some day. We think both things are possible, as well as many other possibilities. The future cannot be known. It is not carved in stone. You are the moving finger, and while you can't undo the past, you can redo the future. Don't limit your future possibilities by announcing you will never change, and then stubbornly not changing because of the announcement! All we can add to what you already know so well ("Wise up, don't fall in these traps..." etc.) is that if you do what you've always done then you can expect the same results. If you are happy with those results (look around), then go for it. If you'd like some different results, then you'd better do some things differently.

**You reap what you sow
So don't blame your
'hood, your town, the
cops, your mothers**

Who Am I?

My mother always taught me, proud is the woman who knows no defeat

sad and worn yet she rises to her feet

But in reality I'm unsure if who I portray to her is really me perfect and successful on the outside, but the confused girl on the inside she's unable to see

Just as her's, my skin color and is almost dark as the midnight skies

truthfully I don't know where I'll end up and where my future lies

She taught me most black men are behind bars

but I ended up handcuffed in the back of a police car

I'm confused on who I am supposed to be and the question still remains why

I still don't know, but I do know it's love I feel for my companion and that's something I can't deny!

Who am I?

-Star, San Mateo

From The Beat: It's sad to hear that your mother, black herself, has such a negative view of black men, and we can only imagine how hard it is for you to love someone who your mother views as unworthy of you. Though you're struggling with the situation, you said some things during our workshop that should lead you towards a course of action. You were right when you said it's not you who's making a choice between your mom and your man, it's your mother who is making the choice. Having said that, we think you owe your man, and yourself, the justice of telling the truth to your mother.

Why I Want To Change

I want to change because I have been through so much in the last four years, and I think it's time to put a stop to it because it's really tearing me into pieces.

It's affecting my mom really hard because she is at home all by herself with no help with my siblings because I'm locked up and my daddy is deceased. But I know that she can do it because she took care of us for the last five years all by herself.

I'm in here until October and I'm not trying to worry myself about anything because I know God is by their side while I'm in here. I got to keep my head up and be strong for my mother.

-Roderick, San Mateo

From The Beat: Wanting to change for your mother is as good a reason as any. When you think about all that she has sacrificed for you, then you realize it's time to think of her before you think of the block or whatever else you put ahead of her. The best present you could give your mom is you — getting out of here and staying out!

Be Accountable

You're accountable for your own actions, so blame yourself not others

You reap what you sow

So don't blame your 'hood, your town, the cops, your mothers

Life's a choice, we're counted for our mistakes

So don't blame the guns, the gangs, the drugs you intake

You see life's a thrill, specially while you're young

You must open your eyes and blame yourself for what you've done

So when things look down and you seem to hate it

Don't blame the time, the place, just listen to what I stated

-Chop, San Mateo

From The Beat: We agree that you are ultimately responsible for the choices you make in life. And we also agree with you that each of us must take responsibility for our own choices, our own actions. But we also think that there are things that influence our choices over which we have no control at all, like the family we were born into, the neighborhoods in which we're raised, the quality of our educations, the way the public views us, the prejudices and biases we're taught at home, etc. None of this gets us off the hook for the choices we make, but all of it helps explain those choices.



causes of change

Something in my life that caused me to change was when my brother got locked up. He's been locked up for a long time now, and he only has maybe about a year left. He is housed in Susanville State Prison. I might have been beginning my teen years when he got locked up.

Up until this day, him being away from me still affects me. You see, I have two older brothers. The one I am talking about is the middle brother. When I was little, my parents worked all day long, so that left either my grandma or my middle brother to take care of me. Mostly it was my brother. He practically raised me. I always confided in him and trusted him. He was always there to help me deal with my problems. It might not have been the best advice, but he tried.

When he got locked up, no one was there. We had a certain bond. Just the fact that he had been through things I was going through, and he always knew what to tell me.

What a coincidence. About a month or so after he was gone, I got locked up for the first time. My mom said that if I keep it up, I'll go down the same road my brother went on. It's not the fact that she tried to tell me I'm going to end up like him, but that she thought she knew what I was about. When he was my age, he used to come to this same juvenile hall. But his crimes were different.

I guess after being real with myself, I came to the conclusion that I have been affected by my brother being incarcerated. But I'm not the only person that has been affected, my mom has too. Now she has two out of three sons locked up. I'm just trying to do what I got to do to get out this place.

But one time I remember that I will never forget is one day when I was bout 5 or 6. I didn't have school. My brother is about eleven or twelve years older than me, so he must have been about 17 or something. He took me on the bus for the first time to Tanforan Mall. We went walking around and I was just happy to be with my brother. We went into Footlocker, and he bought a pair of shoes, the old school black and white Cortez's. But before we left, he told me to try on a pair. And he bought them for me, so we had the same matching shoes. I couldn't be happier.

I admire my brother for a lot of things, and just think that by him getting locked up and me getting locked up made me see what the consequences really are like. He has made my expectations higher, and I am actually trying to do good, so when he gets out no one can say I'm still heading down the same road he went on.

But the funny thing is that he has a son that's about to be eight years old. And my mom and dad say that it's like me and my brother all over again. I treat my nephew the same way my brother used to treat me, and I give him anything I can. But the ending result won't be the same because when I get out, I think he will be old enough to know about what I've been through and about what his dad's been through.

I just want to say thanks to my oldest brother "Huero" because he has really changed my life and plays a big part in it.

-Kurupt, San Mateo

From The Beat: We hope that the cycle you describe here, from brother to brother, will be broken by your nephew, as you believe it will. We admire the way you've connected the dots in a way that lets you see a way to break this pattern. Do you really think it is a "coincidence" that you got arrested shortly after your brother did? What do you think could have helped your older brother from going down the road he went down? What could help other young people from going down this road?

First Time Getting Locked Up

As I was riding in the police car, I was really scared

The cop was acting normal as if he didn't care

I got out of the police car, it was really late at night

My stomach was grumbling but my mouth couldn't speak it was sewn up tight

I got into this secure place, immediately getting my freedom taken away
But I was too tired to notice, I was just trying to figure out where I was going to lay

I was handcuffed the whole time even when they took my picture

Then they read the Miranda rights scripture

I then stripped in front of the person who said turn around squat and cough

After I took a shower I had to put on clothes with the texture that's rough

The underwear had brown stains, the shirt looked worn out

In my mind I was thinking this not what life is supposed to be about

I then stepped through a door that I haven't seen ever since

The time passing by was just aiming on giving me hints

That I would at least spend a couple months here

To tell you the truth that in the beginning was my only fear

After a while the days went from long to really short

Before I knew it three months later they tell me in court

You have to go to camp for at least six to nine

But I'm just too happy to even think about it, why should I whine

All I know I'm gonna do really good and get my time done

So I could be out spending time with my hunny-hun.

-Frenchy, San Mateo

From The Beat: Your minimal picture of a frightened child inside a police car driven by an indifferent officer is one we will remember; it chills our heart. We're not saying you needed this to come to your senses, Frenchy, only that it is obvious that you HAVE come to your senses, whatever the reasons. Spending time with your hunny-hun is a good reason to get out of here, but there are even more important reasons — having to do with who you are and what you can become — for staying out. Six to nine? You'll do fine!

**I then
stripped in
front of the
person who
said turn
around squat
and cough**



Escape

Thug lifestyle, you don't want to live it. It is a bad place and you can't live right in it — claiming sets and doing thug things, if you understand me, then you know what I mean. All over the city that's just how the every day life goes, Bloods and Crips, pants hang low, jump you right and then you can't go.

Hanging on the corner slanging dope and popping ecstasy, that's not the way to go. Snorting heroin, doing speed, if you want to be dumb, then don't do the right things.

I went down and I was left out in the cold, walking lonely with nowhere to go. Wondering if I should go left and I went right. Now I have a new life. Now I have a new way of thinking, and it's not even about drinking. It's about going to school and getting good grades. Try it and maybe you can "escape."

-Candy yam GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Good thinking and good writing, Candace. As long as you act on what you've written here, we know you will get out of the system and stay out. What's the biggest obstacle to you sticking to this new way of thinking?

Education

"Education is helping a young person to realize his potential," Ben Franklin said.

Education means study of methods, principles, problems, etc., of teaching an' learning. Today I was asked what I thought Benjamin Franklin meant by this an' I said that old Ben was simply stating that if you're educated you can find the light inside yourself.

To those who question my anger an' reasons for my anger, I have a famous quote for you: "I have not yet begun to fight." (John Paul Jones).

To all of you who are feeling down an' out about being in here, "Dance like no one is watching, love like you'll never hurt, sing like no one is listening, an' live like it's heaven on earth." (William Purkoy)

To all of you that are scared, frightened, timid, cowardly, or terrified, etc., whatever you would like to do, "Shoot for the moon. Even if you miss you'll land among the stars" (Les Brown).

An' never let anyone influence you on some bs that you can't accomplish this or that.

-Peter B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This piece is filled with excellent advice, even if most of it comes from other people. Do you think you can get the education you describe here in the Hall? How do you plan to achieve that education? What do you hope to do with it?

Experiences That Cause You To Change

I think being incarcerated has changed me. I've had time in here to think about things I did, and things I want to do in the near future.

I hope this is an experience that if you been through it, you wouldn't want to go through it again. I just hope and pray that I get out in time to graduate.

Being in here has given me time to think about things. That's good for me because I'm straight off Juvenile. I'm tired of staff telling me when I can shower, how long I can shower, or when I can eat.

I just take this as an experience that in the future I don't plan on experiencing. I'm out y'all.

-Jay-D B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Even if you don't get out in time to graduate with your class, you can still graduate. We wonder how many times you've been here, and why this time made you think about things in a serious way. We wish more young people would learn the lesson you're trying to teach before they have the experience of being told when to shower, when to eat, when to sleep, etc.

The Change

The thing that change me was the experience of me coming in here. When I started to feel homesick and stuff, I started to think about my folks, my girl, and everything I had in the outs and how everything was important. Now that changed the way I see everything.

This was my changing point in life. I said to myself, "Forget all this stuff, it's time for me to change for my own good. It's time for me to find a way out the game!"

-Juicy-Look B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is interesting, JL. Have you been in the Hall before? What was different about this time? When you say it changed the way you see everything, can you give us some examples of these changes? What are the steps you plan to take to get yourself out of the game? Where do you think those steps will lead you?

**I go to school every day,
do my work, mind my
own business.**

Go To School Every Day

I go to school every day, do my work, mind my own business. But before that I used to cut school every day because if my friend. That's why I messed up in school.

But now I go to sleep at 9:00, wake up at 6:00, go to school by myself, come home with my cousin.

Tha reason why I'm telling yo' this is because that's why I'm here, because of my friend. My dad used to tell me that friends is not good, because they going to mess up yo' life. And now what happened? I'm in hall because of a friend.

-Jamoe B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Do you think all friends will get you into trouble, or that you have to pick your friends with more care? Can you imagine having a friend that keeps you out of trouble? Can you imagine being a friend that keeps someone else out of trouble?

Hard Life

My family neglected me

My pops was never there for me

Seems like nobody cares for me

I gots to make choices carefully

'Cause cops keep on arresting me
And haters just keep on testing me

Trying to do my best

But I know death is gonna be my destiny

Moms steady broke, ain't got no job

Never knew life would be this hard

just got to cope

In this life I'm leaning toward

-Joker, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Death is everybody's destiny and tomorrow is promised to nobody. But life is what you make it. Can you try to make the best with what you have? If you focus on the negative, you won't see the positive. At least you have a mother...



going though Life changes is No joke

Lettin' things go is going to take time
All this stuff on my mind
It's just too much to handle
Doing this alone is not going to fly
Only if you were here to heal me
Deal wit' this shhh
Lettin' things go is going to take time
Being one wit' this pencil and paper
Is all I can do to release
Mmm, my mind is going, running wild
Let me release this stress
And be a little child as long as I can
It's coming and I know it's going to be hard to handle
Put me in the race
Yes, I am ready
I know letting things go is going to take time
If I keep it in my mind
That there's no limit
To my time
I can achieve anything
I put my mind to.

-Vania, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You can achieve anything you put your mind to. Life changes is no joke, they are learning experiences. What have you learned? What are you learning? You are ready, achieve!

Messed up

I think the system's messed up
For sending people away for firing up
Not for guns
But for blunts
They smoke a little weed
Drink a lil' liquor
I don't think the system really cares
Catch a case for a gun
But they let you out to have fun
So you can shoot that gun
Catch a tougher case
Go to a tougher place
How many kids will they set up
Before the people find out that the system's messed up

-Kase LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: What should the system do the first time someone is caught with a gun? Do you think The System should be more strict the first time you get locked up? Looking back what do you think The System should have done with you your first time? Do you think people of any age should be able to "smoke a little weed, Drink a lil' liquor," or should that activity be limited to adults? Why do you think there activities that are only illegal when done by youngsters?

Experiences that Cause you To Change

The experience that first caused me to change
was when I lost love for everything and hated.
My last innocence was lost when my heart was broken.
My blood turned cold and I stopped caring about my actions,
till my actions lead to reactions,
knocking on my family's door,
and me losing control and ending up in max.
When a father you love is lost,
that's the experience that changed my life.

-James, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You say so much in each poetic line. We are deeply sorry for the loss of your father. You described how you were there when it happened. This will take some time to work through. How can you look at the sadness you feel and recognize how you may turn it to anger and violence? You can be a successful professional fighter one day, but what fuels your fists can be what ruins you. Discipline is the key to any art, how will you practice this? Can you find a good mentor or inspiring book?

Jail

Jail ain't cool, I should go to school
Every time I come to jail, I feel like a fool
Sometimes I break the rules
'Cause I don't want to listen to this bull
The DA be hating me
The PO be shaking me
The PD be faking me
The restitution be breaking me
The police be snaking me
And be taking me to the Hall
You already know about the four walls
Head calls and county draws
But do you know about the room full of slime
The long ass time and nothing being mine
Strip searches after visits
Freedom, I'll never get it
And eventually freedom — you'll forget it
The judge wanna lock me away
And throw away the key
She don't care that home is where I wanna be

-Carleton, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Freedom is a privilege — not a right, but you can have your freedom. The key is making "freedom" choices and not "free dumb" choices. Ya feel? In the Bible it states, "God help me to accept what I cannot change and change what I cannot accept — and the wisdom to know the difference."

They Call Me Half Pint In The Hall

I have been growing up on the streets since I was nine years old and my auntie she will smoke cigarettes in front of me. Then I had thought smoking was good and my brother had sold dope on the block.

The police had shot my brother so I had took his place. I've been selling drugs on the streets since I was 9 years old. So now I've been on that road for three years now and now I realize I've been up in the hall six times and I'm getting tired. Sittin' up in this room, lookin' at these white walls, talkin' to myself.

And comin' up in here don't make my life better and everyday I wonder when my life is gonna end. And how I'm gonna grow and what I'm gonna be like when I get older. And I know my daddy is hurting hella bad in the inside, but he not showing it and I'm showing him I don't care.

-Ella, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Ella, you've been through so much at such a young age. You don't want what happened to you brother, happen to you. So, it's probably not a good idea to follow those footsteps. You've been thinking about what you're going to be like when you are older, well, you have the power to decide. You are a smart girl. Where do you see yourself in 5-10 years? You can do anything you set your mind to. You need to decide who in your life is setting a good example, giving you good advice, and start from there.

**My blood turned
cold and I
stopped caring
about my actions,
till my actions
lead to reactions,**



Crys and Change

When I was a young teen and it was summer, one of my homeboys started smoking crys and he was a homeboy so I hung out with him and then I started smoking crys.

That shhh messed me up. I started acting like I was hella hard, after a while I got caught up got sent to Juvi did some time and stopped smoking crys.

It kinda changed my life, I stopped smoking, then picked up drinking, now I ended up here again. Hopefully when I get out I'm gonna change my life to a positive and not mess up and end up here again, 'cause I don't like to see my momma cry.

-Rudy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We hope that drinking doesn't catch up with you like cris did. It can be just a bad if you know what we mean. How can you make your mother smile instead of cry? What would make her proud? And, what are you willing to sacrifice to change?

deaths changed me

An experience that changed me is when I saw this ninja get killed. It was like I have to do the same thing just to live. It's not like I'm scared to die. I know I'm going to die. Anyways, but it's not like I'm going to let the next ninja take my life over some old bullshhh.

Another experience that changed me was when one of my ninjas from the block got killed, Kenny Mack. I knew him when I was about nine, and he always made people look after me. When I came back to the town and my boy Ant told me that, it did not make me cry, it just made me more of a man.

-D-Moe, 150 Crew

From the Beat: We are sorry for the loss of your friend, Kenny Mac. Did you know some believe that courageous men aren't afraid to cry? If you transform your genuine sadness into anger, you will only continue the hatred this person had for your friend. How can you stop the violence and prevent having to resort to it?

**People say real
love comes
with a price,
For you, I'm
willing to pay
the cost**

About My Life

What had change in my life is when I had came to jail. I just started to think about everything that I had did. I just started to think about what I had done with my life. I just started changing everything in my life. I started to do something that I shouldn't do so I had end up in jail and stop thinking about my family.

I didn't care about anything but about me and myself and I was just getting money everyday and my family always calling to police on me and said I'm a run away. But about everyday I don't go home and my family just worried about me, but I wasn't thinking much about my family. So I just started to think about my life I've been through with my family and how much I put my mom and dad through so much stress. They had so much stress with my four brothers. My mom and dad stress too. I am the youngest girl, I'm only 16 years old and I had put them in so much stress that my mom always cry every night about me, and she always going to the hospital and get sick everyday about me.

What did your brothers say when you started following in their footstep?

I just put my head down on them and didn't listen to them so they had got mad at me because I was just doing anything, what I want. I didn't care what they had said tome and do the same thing what I was doing just went and get money and my brother had got so mad at me that he wanted to hit me so that I could learn my lesson. Because my brother he at camp right now, he just up the hill from me and I had seen him when I went to court today. He just look down on me like I had look down on him. He was mad at me because he loved me so much. I'm his only sister that he got and he didn't want me to be up in jail, like him.

-Lisa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Lisa, it seems that you've been doing a lot of thinking lately. What do you think about what you've done with your life? Your mom and dad are stressed out, and your brother is mad because they love you so much. What can you do to make them proud of you? What is important to you? Now that you are in the Hall, you should be thinking. So, what's up?

Love (in most girls eyes)

Boy you are sweeter than a strawberry,
Your love makes me weak and hopeless,
Being with you I feel nothing could go wrong,
People say real love comes with a price,
For you, I'm willing to pay the cost,
Some may call me foolish or stupid, but I don't care because for you I'll fly anywhere,
Boy there's nothing in this world that makes me feel good about myself, but you,
Boy all I wanna do is lay up and cup cake with you,
Throwin' down my love to you,
Boy, making passionate love with you is all I want,
Your love is like two birds flyin' high and beautiful as two doves,
You're like an angel that flew out from heaven just to see me,
Even a pot of gold ain't better than you,
Good luck from you is what I was told,
As time grows old, so does our love for past, present and future,
I give thanks to the man above, the Lord all mighty, for bringing us together and
letting our love stay the same since the first day we met,
Boy, you're so fine you blow my mind,
I surely love you like a fat kid loves cake,
For you I'll do anything that it takes to make you happy in whatever way,
Your love brings much pleasure,
When our hearts touch, you and I cannot be stopped,
I'm surely glad to have you by my side and I hope that our love doesn't fade away,
Boy, the first time we saw each other I knew that it was love at first sight,
And would be soul mates forever.

-Lil' Mama Hanna, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Lil' Mama, wow! Sounds like you're really in love. Great poem. What kind of guy does it take to earn your love?



getting shot was A shock

This is Byrdman, an' my culture shock is when I got shot. October 16th, 2002, I ran from my group home thinking I was gon' be under and last until I turned eighteen, but I didn't.

October 28, 2002, I was chillin' with a girl on this street, and two people roll up with AK's and just started bustin'. I got hit twice in the stomach with an AK, once in my right shoulder, and one time in my back — my intestine was hanging out and I was just in "culture shock."

I really didn't feel no pain until I got to the hospital, when they said they had to cut me open. See, they had to cut me open many times because the AK bullets bust in me and left poison. So when they cut me open that third time and I was in surgery. I woke up and seen the pizza cutter cutting me open and I was in culture shock, then I went back to sleep.

-ByrdMan, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's creative how you made this physical shock you experienced into the topic culture shock. Your gangster culture not only endangers your life but your loved ones' life and happiness. Is this lifestyle worth this? When will you start to look outside of your wants and addictions and start to see the big picture? We hope you live long and prosper, while keeping all your body parts together. Be safe and intelligent.

i'm going to make it

Screw everybody but me. That is how I felt at first, and that's what I was thinking when I found out I was on my own till at least eighteen in institutions.

I guess that I felt this way at first because I was scared and found it overwhelming knowing I had no home to return to for home passes at placements, or a place to go after placements.

Over the past months, I've been thinkin' though; somewhere I decided to move on and be my own person. So instead of trippin' on what already happened, I've been trippin' on what's gonna happen, and how I'm gonna make it in this world.

So I still feel screw everybody, but not in as much of a negative way, but as a positive way as in "screw everyone, ain't no one stoppin' me from makin' it".

-Daniel, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You are going to make it! This won't be an easy journey, but it will get easier as you go along. Now, what kind of future do you see in store for you? What kind of plans are you making? What do you think will be the biggest obstacle standing in your way? And will you be able to take on what ever gets in your way?

Standing Tall

The only experience that causes me to change is when you have your mind set on getting out, and the judge just says, "Detained."

It changes yo' whole ego, feel me?

So wake up and get yo' bread an' meat.

Open them eyes,

keep yo' head up

'cause we gotta survive

and stand tall through it all.

-Bozy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This was a short one but it got us going. We felt your heart in this and it's inspiring. What will you do to stand tall? How will you get the support you need to make it legit and free for you and your loved ones?

Experiences That Caused Me to Change

When I was little everybody use to tell me how I am good and that I am smart. I didn't know how I was changing until I stopped doing all them drugs and drinking.

I guess around when I hit middle school I kept getting kicked out of school for dumb reasons.

aThen at one school when I was trying to fit in, I chilled with my old friend that banged. When I got closer to them they asked me if I wanted to smoke and at that point it was hard for me to say no, because all of them are waiting for me to say something. So I went along and said yeah. So I was high then I started to make it an everyday thing and before I knew it we did a lot of stupid stuff. I stopped going to school because I got lazy. Then I got caught up for stealing cars, and then got caught for holding people's weapon.

Then I lost lots of good friends that looked out for me, but I messed up. So they made me learn from the hard way. I was mean to my parents, didn't care about what they said and stuff like that.

Finally when I messed up they always say crime makes you pay time. I never thought doing stuff can change how you act, how you live. Before I knew it I was in Juvenile Hall. I got my mind straight now; I can think smarter. This ain't the place to live in. I miss my parents and the outside. I didn't think. When I come back out I'm gonna do it different than how it was. That's my story.

-Than, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sometimes we have to go through the hard times before we learn lessons. It was once said that that the biggest lessons are learned from our darkest days. Now, the good news is that you can make it up to your parents and you should do that while they're still around 'cause they ain't gonna be there forever. Real talk. Now, how will you make your time on the outs productive? Good luck with your change.

From Juvy To The Pen Is A Difference

Before coming to Juvenile Hall I was bad, out of control, doing drugs, smokin' weed, drinking, until now I just came to jail. I promise myself and I promise God that I learned my lesson. I am only seventeen and a half and I could face up to three years and eight months for a gun charge. I only could do six months to a year in Juvenile Hall, the rest will be in San Quentin or the pin.

I have experienced that if I don't act right this is where I will be heading. For those who are 16-17 years of age, I hope that you do act right and continue like I did, 'cause then you will be where I am headed to. There are no CYAs, there's no Juvenile Hall, it is time for adult jail — the pen. It is 100 times worse then Juvenile Hall is. I hope you realize what you're heading for.

-Michael, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're glad that you've finally woken up to smell the fresh air. Regardless if the system takes it easy on you or makes it difficult, will you still make a change? What are you willing to give or give up to make a positive change?

**the pen. It is 100
times worse then
Juvenile Hall is**



Waste Of A Case

An experience that caused me to change,
The fame, the blame, the crime with a name.

Vandalism spree, restitution high,
nine thousand one hundred, will I pay before I die?

Stand up, take responsibility, is what I was told
Haven't passed my junior year, almost seventeen years old.

Now stuck in a room, my feet feel cold,
Will I get out before I'm seventeen years old?

April 27th is the day,

I go to court on April 12, how much will I have to pay?
I thought I would not get picked up, I guess I was wrong

No ifs, ands, or buts, these 31 days seem so long
I couldn't run or hit the cuts, now I sit with my face in my hands
Waste of a case, at least I'm becoming a man.

-Picaso, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If you've learned something from this experience, then it's not a waste of time. There's so much learned and an expanded mind. With every step you take, your future is concerned, now what will you do with the lessons learned?

Samuel's Love For His Parents/ Family

I am very thankful for having the parents that I have, and I would never even think of changing my parents for anything in my God's world. I know I have the best dad and mom that I love with every inch of my heart. I am grateful for having both my parents still together as well my brothers and baby sisters.

Now that I'm in the Hall, I hear about all these kids up in here that grew up without their dad and had to learn or are having to learn how to be a man on their own. Kind of like what my dad had to do. He is a great father to me and I have put him through so much and people keep telling me that I'm lucky to have a dad like the one I have, and I feel bad because I haven't showed him love like he does to me. But inside of I know that I do love him and my mom, but it is time for me to show them and I am.

I made a promise to God and my dad that when I get out of here I was going to finish my group home to show my family that I do love them very much — the main reason I'm doing this. And I'm going to change my life, and turn my life around for my family, and because I know it's for my own good. I love my family and soon enough united we will be.

-Samuel, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You are very lucky to have two parents — not many are blessed with that. And what we all fail to realize at one point or another is that our parents ain't always gonna be around. You have a limited time to appreciate them, which is scandalous, but also a part of life. What lessons that they've taught you will you want to teach your children?

**I can say I'm sorry
until my tongue
falls out of my
mouth,
but that won't
change anything.**

I've Changed So Much

I've changed so much I don't know who I am. When I moved to a ghetto 'hood down in Hayward, my life changed. From an innocent little boy to a guilty gangbanger throwin' up signs. Growing around OG's has influenced my mind to hurt and do drugs all the time.

Sometimes I wonder if my life wouldn't be this way. Sometimes I want to change. I want to take a time machine back to my past to change the things that I did like committing crimes and doing drugs, and being initiated in a gang.

I wish this was a dream so I can start my life again.

-Flaco, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Unfortunately, we cannot turn back the hands of time. You can't go back and undo the drugs and crime. But what you can do is try to find a better way. Then tomorrow will be a brighter day! The choice is yours, step up!

Fo' My Momma

I love you mom! I would do anything for you. Your B-day's on April eighth, the same day as my sentencing. I truly am sorry. I know I put you through a lot of pain and suffering. I can say I'm sorry until my tongue falls out of my mouth, but that won't change anything.

My eyes have opened and I know that now is the time for me to stand up and be a man. Mom, I promise ya I will make you proud of me once again. I need you to know that I appreciate you and I'm very grateful for having such a caring mother.

Mom no matter what females come into my life, you will always be #1. I have the utmost respect for you. I miss you so much. I feel so blessed that the Lord allowed an angel to be my mother.

Mom, Happy Birthday, I love you. Be home soon. I pray!

-Keek, 150 Crew

From The Beat: These are some sweet lines to a sweet mother. You are a good young man, Keek. You show such heart and determination that will get you through your time. It's good you realize what you have — a good mom. She shows unconditional love for you. How will you help her and help yourself when you get out to make her proud? Are you willing to drop your old homies and habits to lead a new and different life?

Mom, Happy Birthday, I love you

Missing Everything

I've been stressing. Just miss going home. My family is really far from me. When I am not able to go home, I cry missing family, friends. And I miss the times me and my girl were together.

I might not get to hold her for a while. I miss when I use to play with my little brothers, when they use to run up to me and give me a hug. My life is passing through my eyes like it's all a big memory of the fun times. Should of thought before I was out on the streets doing dirt.

I blame nobody but myself. Now I use this time to look on the things I've done and I feel sorry for myself.

-Kev, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You sound like you have a nice family to go home to. What can you do to make up for lost time with your loved ones? Now that you've got some time to think about everything, what will you be doing differently so that your life will be better?



At The Front Door Two

At the front door
As hours and hours pass
Just to hear: "You can not enter heaven's door?"
As I start to turn to walk away,
something stops me to ask why
"Why can't I enter heaven's door?"
The angel said to me:
"Did you ask why when you robbed that man?"
Or did you ask why when you ran away from that group home?
So without a word to say
I go down to my knees and pray for the hours and hours to pass by
And God said to me, "You can now enter heaven's door, for I have now
forgiven you for your sins."

-Donta, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is beautiful dialogue and a good lesson to learn. You look at the choices you made and held yourself accountable. You redeem yourself through prayer. How else will you redeem yourself? In the future, do you think that you will still have to face some of the consequences from the past that haven't caught up yet? Be ready.

Changed My Life

A time that changed my life is when I first came to ACJH (150). I was chillin' at the house. I had just caught my first petty theft case and one police officer and a case manager worker came by and said that they had a warrant for my arrest.

This hurt so bad because someone in my family just got out and for me to be goin' for the first time — it hurts. They said that I was going to get out in a few days, I did a month. It hurt so much because I was trying to be cool, but I had to defend myself because I represent San Francisco to the fullest and kids thought that I was a sucka.

When I got here I knew that if I messed up I would have to experience that again. Now I am back and I got to deal with the same shhh.

-Lil' Kev, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Now, what can you do to get yourself out of the system? How can you prove to the courts and those that will judge you that you deserve a second chance? What good will representing do for you while you're locked up?

Major Depression

I have been suffering major depression. I don't know why I suffer from it.

I have been in group homes from the age of nine to seventeen years of age, and I really need to be with my family. When I'm not with my family, I get very sad — and I sometimes think about hurting others and myself.

I have tried to kill myself over 10 times. I have bad dreams. I'm always worried, thinking something bad is happening to my family and myself. But I also have thoughts about hurting my mother and sisters, and my friends.

I have tried not to think of these things, but they just come to my mind. The system thinks I need to be in a group home, but I don't think I need to go to a group home. I need to go home with my family.

-Mark, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We know you're taking medication, both to improve your mood and to help you suppress those murderous thoughts. We hope it helps you soon. Chemistry aside, our best guess would be that it's some sort of confused attempt to erase the source of your pain, because it hurts to be away from those you love. Our suggested therapy would be: handle yourself with love, patience, and caring attention to what's best for you — it won't make things worse and it might make things better.

Special Plants

Personally I love being high (many can relate). Getting high and everything has to do with the high life.

I smoke herb like some people inhale cigarettes, ten to twenty times a day. I smoke like Bob Marley, old Snoop Dogg and Devin the Dude who made a whole album about weed adventures.

However, I also sniff that coke, man like some others and pump stunners on a daily. I call it self-medicating — cocaine, weed, shrooms come all from good plant.

I'm not saying they don't get messed before they get sold on the street corner but I got all the pure stuff except coke. But I know what you guys are going to say. Drugs kill brain cells. It's bad for your health, lungs, especially your heart. But honestly I look at it like I'm going to die anyway. I might die

high. I also believe that my religion condones it. I believe in a certain kind. So I stay smoking that green leaf.

-Jeremy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thanks for putting it down like you do — very honest and open. You already know the affects of drugs and if you don't want to live long and prosper than go ahead and continue this lifestyle. Just because a religion has it's rules and norms doesn't mean you have to continue doing those things you know that might be harming you. That's just using religion to justify. Explain to us why drugs are used in your religion. It sounds like you get high and stay high is there anything at all you might be escaping from — a hard life, a bad memory, anger, sadness...?

MY experiences

I had difficulties growing up on the streets. My whole family affiliated with street gangs on the streets of Hayward. At a young age I was suffering.

My dad went to the pen for attempted murder. Then my uncles being OG's from the streets they were making big money pulling 60 keys a week. I was raised like that — drugs, money and lots of alcohol.

Now I blame my family for all the things I've done, hanging out with the wrong crew, being paranoid, and strapped at all times. Now I'm paying up in the Hall waiting for my last chance hoping they don't send me to the CYA for a few years. RIP Jesse.

-Lil' Juanito, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Do you think that your family would hold a grudge against you if you decided to change your ways? What do you personally want for your future? How will your future be affected by the choices you make today? How can you prove to the courts that you deserve another chance?

**I have been in
group homes
from the age of
nine to seventeen
years of age**



Why?

why ...
do people always
be so mean to me?
why ...
do people stay waiting
for me to get in trouble?
why ...
do my family do me
so damn cold?
why ...
do my aunty
do me so wrong?
why ...
is my life
a living hell?
why ...
do people want to
jump me for?
why ...
do people got to
talk about me?
why ...
my uncle had to

leave me like this?
why ...
did my grandma
have two shocks?
why...
are they trying to
take me always
from my mom?
why ...
do bad things
always happen
to me?
i just really
do not know
anymore but ...
why?

-Lost, 150 Crew
From The Beat: "Some are born to sweet delight. Some are born to darkest night." Your words tonight, add flesh to this protest poem of Wm. Blake. Don't give up on yourself, and don't give up on your life! Keep writing from your heart until you start to see a way that will lead you toward the light of a better day. To know what you want, will provide you direction.

for A friend

I've been in the Hall for four months, and I'm finally getting released to my group home. I might be there for fifteen-to-eighteen months, and it's going to be hard.

I remember the days when you and me posted on the block, or we'd go to your girlfriend's house, Tyoni. I miss her, too, and everyone else that we hung out with.

I heard about your grandma doing bad, and that your uncle died. Why didn't you tell me? I'm your cousin you know, and that's my family, too! I hope you are still getting letters from Tyoni.

My grandma be visiting me, but I probably won't see her for a while, either. I should never have failed them. I should have listened to Terry, Israel, and our cousin Jo.

I wanted to do my own thing. But now I know what to do the next time that I'm in the same situation — I'm going to listen!

-Lil' Dirty, 150 Crew
From The Beat: You've written lots of fine pieces for The Beat, but this may be the most mature and wise one you've written. Maybe your feeling compassion for Lil' Man, reminded you of what you really care about. Funny how sympathy for others can help us. It sounds like you've finally learned your lesson.

Owe A Lot To My Girl

I think the one person that changed my life, was my girlfriend. She made me think about the things that I do.

If I would've not met my girlfriend, I would've not had the baby girl that makes me so very happy to be a dad. And if it was not for my girlfriend, I would be dead. She showed me that not making money, is not the end of the world — that family is more important than money.

I love my girl. I think that when I get out, I will be a good father to my little girl because I have my girlfriend, a great girlfriend who is a great mother for my baby girl!

When I get out, I'll be happy because my family will be complete.

-Family Man, 150 Crew
From The Beat: If you've really learned that making money is less important than being there for your family, then you've learned what might be the most important lesson a father can learn in the world today. Why are men taught to believe they count no more than the money in their pockets? If your pockets are empty, with your family around you, you are still a wealthy man — rich in love and respect.

What It's Like Fo' Me

scandalous position
dumb decision
'cause i didn't listen
street life cleared my mind
'cause it was brought to my attention
a mind full of clouds
lookin' through my bloodshot eyes
mouth hella dry
askin' the Lord to tell me why
my body is tired
bones achin' wit' my eyes twitchin'
findin' the easy way out
so i can pick up a blunt and start hittin' it
home is where i can't stay
but what more could i say
i ain't tryin' to feel no pain
i'd rather be labeled a runaway
my world is lightweight hurt
everyday i'm getting blurped
put the pedal to the metal
watch a ninja mess wit' a skirt
it seems like i have to let these hatas
know what I'm all about
and if it's out of me and you
i'll tell you i'm not going out
my life just started
and already i'm gettin' frustrated
can't even look down on my life
because the whole thing is x-rated
i got to be cool
maintain a smooth attitude
can't let them know i'm rude
because i'm still tryin' to bend the rules
so that's all for now
just keep your head up

-Scooby, 150 Crew
From The Beat: That me-or-you attitude, facing a scenario of violent death, sounds as if it makes perfect sense, but in truth it will have you paranoid, packing, and acting a fool — one impulsive mistake and your life won't ever be cool. We don't blame you for where you've been or the life you grew up in. But you need to see it's time for a change, top to bottom. Start putting that first-rate brain to use, avoid drug-abuse and put in work creating an adult life free from the dirt and the hurt of the street. Don't just bend the rules and call it pimpin' — take an inventory of all your old thinking. Face the honest truth and start to listen, before you condemn yourself to prison. Great lyrics as always, Scooby: we just want you to see better days, truly.

**I will be a
good father to
my little girl
because I have
my girlfriend, a
great girlfriend
who is a great
mother for my
baby girl!**



respect it!

i get really sick and tired
of fake old people in my face
fake old lines like
let's kick it and go to my place
when all my cousins and i
walk through the town
we can't go nowhere
without a person pulling up
and asking one of us to get down
or a gay female blowing kisses at us
i tell them straight up
without having to fuss,
i'm from the town
but i don't get down
so accept it or reject it
but you got to respect it

-Tyresha, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Yeah woman! You got respect for yourself and a strong sense of self. Too bad they assume you are like some other females and disrespect. It's hard, but keep being yourself — and whenever you can, stay away from places where people will try to take advantage of you!

**One thing I don't
like about my
culture is the
music and how
they dance.**

the other Me!

Me: What's up man? Why you actin' like a square, man, bein' all good, no talkin' back, not fighting? Man, you actin' like a rookie, when you really a veteran! You know the game and how it's supposed to go now. You just a little punk!

The Other Me: Man, why are you trippin'? You the one who got me here in the first place? Man, I can't stand you! Why do other people like you? Even got my boys KG, Black Jack, Lil' E, all hypnotized. Man, you ain't nothin' but a knucklehead. You got me into all the stuff I'm in. Why won't you just leave and never come back?

Me: Because I'm a part of you. You can't make it without me. I put money in your pocket. I give you females and excitement. Without me you're nothin'!

-Travoy and Chunky

From The Beat: You have a lot of different sides of yourself, almost competing to get out. One part of you seems like it could be a true leader. This dialogue is between you and yourself! Which one will win out or will they always compete? Can you be who you want to be and still get a cool lady?

**I was doing a drug
called nitrous. Back
then, it was
“the thing to do”**

Nitrous Oxide

One time, back in ninth grade, I was doing a drug called nitrous. Back then, it was “the thing to do” — so I decided to do it. I didn't know it had any harmful effects on the body, plus it made me feel good for a short time.

I was with my girlfriend, at her friend's house, when she decided to do it, too. She totally went nuts on me! I can't explain exactly what happened, but she kept walking towards me, with a weird ol' smile on her face, asking me to give her a hug.

I was like, “What the...! You look like a knock!” So I pulled out a BB gun and was gonna pop her in the face if she didn't get away from me. And her friend came out of nowhere and started yelling at me to get out!

She thought it was a real gun. I was like, “It ain't real.” And she said she didn't care. So I went outside for a minute, and then I went to the house. I dumped that broad the next day.

Then I was up in my tree house, where me and my cousin be doin' illegal things, and, anyway, I was up there huffin' some nitrous. And I guess I did too much. I passed out! I fell like twenty feet and hit the fence on the way down! I got up and was tryin' to walk, but I could hardly see. I stumbled through the garage and into the house.

I had to do an MRI to make sure I wasn't bleedin' internally. I wasn't, but I had three broken ribs and a cracked vertebrae. It was like the L5 vertebrae or something. I could hardly walk for like a month. Needless to say, I didn't do that drug again.

-Socrates, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We wonder if, as you read your story, you'll also feel that you were way too hard on your girlfriend for reacting strangely to a drug she'd never taken before. (Maybe nitrous oxide destroys the ability to feel empathy?) As for your fall, you're lucky you're still walking around! But you need to stop simply switching from one drug to another — as if a meth pipe's better! The hardest thing in life for some of us to learn, is to be comfortable in our own skin. Twelve Steps can help you get there and stay there, as opposed to temporary drug-induced euphoria.

MY culture

I grew up in the Philippines with my Filipino family. They taught me a lot of things while I was there growing up. When I went to the States the first time, I wasn't used to how things worked, 'cause I grew up with a different culture.

In my culture, people ate with their hands. So when I got to the States, I had to adapt to using forks and spoons. In the Philippines, we wore slippers, but in America I had to wear shoes. My culture prepared me for the States only a little bit. There were a lot of things I had to get used to.

In my culture, we wear uniforms to school, but in America we can wear regular clothes. In my culture, we are not supposed to start dating at an early age, but I do anyways — and every time my grandmother asks me why I am dating at an early age, I say, “We are not in the Philippines, we are in America!”

One thing I don't like about my culture is the music and how they dance. My culture is into cha-cha and tango, while I'm into hip-hop, rap, and R&B.

They dance like white people, while me, I like to freak and get down. If my culture saw me dancing like that, they would get hella mad. My culture likes to watch love stories, and they don't like rap songs 'cause the words are too fast and they can't understand it.

Other than that, I like my culture, and I learned a lot from it.

-Peanut, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What a fine description, filled with detailed differences between the Filipino culture in which you were raised and the culture in which you find yourself living, and to which you have so quickly adapted. Do you think ‘culture shock’ has anything to do with your becoming incarcerated? Do you think it would have happened like this in the Philippines? Are your parents less able to guide in this strange and alien culture?



(thug) culture shock

Where my state of mind comes from, is where I grew up. I'm from Oakland, and I grew up on street life — trying to sell drugs, trying to be something like the OG's.

But later on in the process, I started getting caught. So that as a shock to me! 'Cause jail wasn't the place for me. And I had started to do so much to where my mom had sent me to my Auntie's house in San Diego. That's where I had to be in the house before ten and all type of stuff like that.

Then I started doing hella trash out there. Then I got sent back to Oakland and doing the same old thing. So I started not listening. And that took me to another level: I just didn't care! So I went back to jail for "possession for sales" — and that's how I ended up in Camp right now.

So now I'm trying to make a change to where I could be better off in life — so I won't end up in prison! So right now, I'm just studying the aftermath of the life I was living.

-Young Dether, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is such a clear portrait of the downward descent that sets in after the boyish dream of crime with no consequences comes to a shocking halt. You got addicted to the street life, to its ways of thinking and acting as well as its so-called easy money. Your I-don't-care attitude makes it clear this is an addiction; 'cause addiction is basically a mental illness, a form of insanity — even a slow suicide. You deserve better.

No More Blame

I have been incarcerated for twenty-six months now. When I first got incarcerated, I blamed the system for everything that had happened to me. But I also blamed my family for what I had to go through as a child.

Now I have a different opinion about things. I know I can't go through life blaming all my problems on everything else. So actually the system has changed my thoughts and opinions on the whole judicial/correctional system. So being incarcerated has changed my whole outlook on the system.

-Lil' Dave, Virginia

From The Beat: This is an empowering attitude to have about your life but don't take all the blame. As a child and young adult, the system and your family are partly responsible for what happened/s to you. There are reasons why you have led your life this way. You are right, you have the ability to change your life and can't place blame on everything. But it's important to take a good look and understand what had happened to you as a child and how the system is imperfect so that you know how to deal with your present life.

I'm The Outcast

I sit back in my cell and think about my past and all the stupid shhh I have done in my life before. I'm away from my family and loved ones. I think my parents, brother, and sister really look down on me for being the outcast in my family. I think they look down on me for the fact that my sister has graduated from high school and my brother, too. And I'm on my last year of high school and I'm in Juvenile Hall and getting ready to go to Grizzly

Youth Academy for 5 1/2 months. Grizzly is a military boot camp for teens.

My life has been so different from everyone else in my family and makes me feel lower than them in human standards, but I'm ready to change my ways. When I get out of Grizzly I will be eighteen years old and am going to enlist in the Marines so hopefully my parents won't think of me as an outcast. Peace!

-Blake, San Luis Obispo

From The Beat: You have many talents, and we're sure your family appreciates you. We hope that your relationship with them gets better. When do you cross the line from just being different and unique to being an outcast? Do outcasts want to be outcasts? Would you try to be friends with an outcast if you weren't an outcast?

it's dead shady

police are lowdown shady
they will arrest you
for any little thing
you can be walking down the street
with your pants sagging
they would stare at you
and pull you over
like it's nothing
people are shady too
you can just stare at someone
with that look
and y'all would start something
people's parents are shady too
you can come home late
and your parents would get mad
and kick you out your own house
everything is going up in cost
like rent — cable — telephone bills
everything done changed
now the world is changed by law
and it's just shady

-Lee, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's never been easy to be poor or working/poor. Yet as the safety net that took a hundred years to build, continues to unravel, along with public education, yeah — it seems like the world is getting to be a meaner place again.

MY family

The thing that gets me through each day alive and month is my mom and dad because I love them so much.

They're the only thing in my life that's left because they're the only ones that love me, so I got to do good so my parents could see me grow up and graduate from high school, get my diploma so I could get a career and get a good job like Bill Clinton. Then I could make billions of dollars, buy my parents a house straight — no slanging crack.

-Chuck, Napa

From The Beat: A good set of parents is always great motivation! That's good that you want to do good and get your act straight. Try to self motivate yourself also though because when you do things you should do them for yo' self and then reward and give thanks for the ones you love. Good luck!

For Violent Felonies And Masterminds Only

I think the three strikes law should be enforced in some ways. It should only be enforced on the third felony if it is a violent crime. If the same person keeps coming to court with a felony or conspiracy to commit the crime it shouldn't fall under the three strikes law.

Now on the other hand, if a person keeps coming to court with felonies for actually being the brains of the operation of crime, whatever it might be, they should get life, because evidently that person hasn't learned anything.

-T-Money, Virginia

From The Beat: This is a common argument to this law. It seems like the brains behind big crimes get off or is never caught and they are responsible for so many people's lives and incarceration. It's difficult for some people who are released back in the same environment they were in and never given their options for a different way of living. How do you think the system can help people learn?



Don't Leave

Tu eres mi angel
Tu eres mi amor
If I can't be with you
I don't want to live anymore
Without you in my life
I have no reason to breathe
I want to be with you forever
Please don't ever leave
I don't know what I'd do
If you ever did walk away
And I love you more
With every breath that I take
So don't ever go 'cause I will never leave you either
I wanna be with you forever
'Cause in the end
We'll always be together.

-Spanky, Napa

From The Beat: Is this true? You can't live without your girl? If you want to be with your girl so bad, why did you do things that get you locked up? Sometimes we think that we can't live without our significant other, but really this is called, "attachment." It's possible to love and be attached to someone synchronically, but you have to realize the difference.

The Future Of My Past

As I begin to grasp
At every last ounce of dignity
I spit on the past
And write a new page in history
The future draws near
And I fear only my memory's
Desire to sing to me
Yesterday serves as the shadow of tomorrow
Allowing the darkness
And heartlessness of my actions
To cling to me
It seems to me that indecency
Is serving as wings to me
Flying me in rings to see
I can't escape the reason
I never ceased to breathe
The reason I'm a villain to society

And a zero to my family
I can't escape the reason
Living in secrecy
Has become a necessity
Successfully ripping me apart
Letting immortality get the best of me
Rest in peace has become
A false statement of hope
In hope that my regret
Will put your diabolical thoughts
Of me at ease
I am not a savage beast
I fear and love, fail and succeed
I am a human being

-Michael, San Luis Obispo

From The Beat: Wow, Michael, this is an incredible flow. In the face of being reminded on the daily of your failure, how can you remember the successes of your life, and remember that you are a human being? Where can you turn to for strength? Inside yourself? To paper and pencil? Music? Somebody you trust?

Life Can Pass You By

I sit here day by day
Watching my life just pass me by
I sit up late at night asking God why
Why have I just been deprived?
Deprived of a life of at least an average guy
That could be why I'm so shy
Afraid of being denied a life
That I have not yet earned
So I sit here, and I try to change
Change for myself
If there's one thing I've learned
I've learned that a good life comes
With many sacrifices

-Gujer, San Luis Obispo

From The Beat: A lot of people think sacrifices are hard, so they don't make them. Is there a way to look as sacrifices so that they don't seem like sacrifices? For ex., if sacrifices end up making your life easier, can you look at them as a good thing and not a hard thing? Does it make a sacrifice any easier if you look at them different?

crazy thoughts

Hold a conversation with the devil
Hold my own 'cause I see demons on my level
Walk by myself, might seem kind of whack
Walk by myself, because only God got my back
Conversations with myself, might think I'm lunatic
I got thoughts in my head that some see as sick
But money on my mind can't hesitate
Plans to come up quick, premeditate
An angel on the left shoulder, a devil on the right
Dreams that I'm dead, visions of the light
Struggle another day so I can live another night

-Peanut Head, San Mateo

From The Beat: You have referred to this dark side of you before, the demons on your level, but without more information, we see no real evidence of your good-bad struggle. Do you see the thoughts in your head as sick? Are you money driven? Do you think of yourself as a lunatic? Why? Can you get under the surface with this line of writing, and reveal more?

...my people aren't that great No different from the ones I hate

change

I never thought I would change my ways
I hear how things are and I feel it's gay
I once lived a life full of hate
But I soon realized I disliked my fate
Live a life with just one race
Then my people aren't that great
No different from the ones I hate
I realized I've lived a mistake
Now I live happily without any hate

-X-Skin, San Mateo

From The Beat: We are, of course, impressed by your writing, X, but we are even more impressed by your thinking. Why do you think that some people never move beyond that level of racism that you were taught. What can we do to move those people to your realization that we are all human beings, plagued by doubts and uncertainties, and blessed by brains and hearts and souls, and that color and other superficial differences are just that, superficial?

HEY, Are YOU?

People say I look like myself
I look like no one
I'm far from famous
I do nothing too well, nothing for people to say much
If I had to be someone it would be me
If I could look like someone it would not be you
And I would not want to be famous
'cause then everyone would want to be me,
look like me, but in the end they would hate me
'Cause then they would see the true me.

-Elmo, Virginia

From The Beat: This is a playful poem at first and then it got more personal. Why would people hate you? From reading your writings, we like you very much. Sometimes what we assume people think about us is really what we think about ourselves. Do you not like yourself sometimes? Some believe that the true you/the essence of you is constantly changing. Remember that nobody is perfect and has done things or has thoughts that they aren't proud of —that's completely normal. How can you be less critical of yourself?



stripped

It's a trip
as I dip
feel the drip
as I grip
I sit
as my freedom's ripped
I spit
as a dreamer's wish list gets
so big it tips
and flips
and then it hits
and splits
and all the kid's
wishes
get torn from his hands
his soul
soars from the land
it's told
if we demand
the gold
I'm just a man
with foes
I'm stripped
but then my hand
it folds
and it holds
the hole

-Shawn, San Luis Obispo

From The Beat: Tight flow, Shawn. Why do you have foes? What can you change about your life to leave those foes behind and live among friends? Which dreams/goals do you still hold onto? What keeps those dreams alive? What's your plan to reach those goals?

**forgive me for living
the la vida loca
for which you say I honor
and glorify
instead of my own familia!**

My Dream Girl

I want my dream girl to like me for me
I wanna be able to communicate with her
Want her to feel safe around me
My dream girl to be smarter than me
And we'll always vow to be
It doesn't matter what race she is
She could even have two kids
She could be any height
As long as it's her I'm holding at night
My dream girl could believe in anything
But I'll be here to back her up
She shouldn't be afraid to talk to me
You say in one year you don't know where our love will be
But I'll tell you this you'll be with me
I've found my dream girl and she's still with me
I love you girl

-Youn 1, San Mateo

From The Beat: It's the list of qualities you want ("...smarter than me...") and don't care about ("...doesn't matter what race she is...") that elevates this declaration of love to a Standout. Sounds like you lucked out, bit time!

MY childhood memories

I remember being thrown in the air then to be caught, and what a rush
Eating baby food that now looks to me like oatmeal, blended to be mush
A picture of me playing on the beach with my brothers
Always feeling safe and happy when huggin' my mother
Getting yelled at and punished still haunts me to this day
Having to live in an apartment all my life 'cause my parents didn't get much money
Getting a bike was like getting a car when I was young
Everybody gave me a slap on my hand when I did something wrong
I also remember having my dog taken away and never brought back
Being really cautious 'cause I believed in superstitions, so I watched out for every crack
My teachers always told my parents I was really an intelligent boy
Not knowing that what they were really seeing was a decoy
At first I loved school, then slowly began to hate it
I wasn't ever right, I never seemed to fit, so after awhile I just quit
So now my thoughts start getting pulled into all the bad things
Like being picked on by my brothers telling me they were my kings
To everyone who has had a bad childhood, I hope things get better
Think of all the good that cancels out the bad
Thanks for listening to my childhood letter

-Frenchy, San Mateo

From The Beat: This "letter" is full of sweet, and not-so-sweet, reminiscences. It tells us some of the chronology of your life, but leaves out some of the reasons. Why do you think that "intelligent boy" was really a decoy? What did your intelligence hide? And what made you grow to hate school? You have such word skills, that we look for more from you. But, still, we really liked this piece.

MOM

Mama, can you forgive me for all the times I made you cry?
Dear mama, I don't want you to die
let me heal the pain inside
for I'd rather die if you were to leave my side
Forgive me for being locked up in chains in this life of madness
where all I carry is hate and sadness
and forgive me for living the la vida loca
for which you say I honor and glorify
instead of my own familia!
Dear mother of mine,
would you forgive me for this crazy life of mine!

-Oso, San Mateo

From The Beat: This is a sweet piece, and we know how deeply you care about your mom. We know one way that you'd earn her forgiveness for sure — choose her over the gang. It's that simple.

**I can't blame nobody but
myself. So I ain't going to
be mad at myself!**

Missing Out

When I'm in the halls, locked up in this detention center, I miss hella shhh going on, on the outs.

My brother's BM [baby's mother] had a baby! My cousin turned eighteen, and they were doing it real royal! All the while, I was locked up in here.

I can't blame nobody but myself. So I ain't going to be mad at myself! But when I get out, I'm gonna try to stay out of jail so I can enjoy my life — and better myself.

-Lil' T, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That's the ticket! Use this experience to motivate yourself to do right, so you can enjoy your life of freedom — and work toward a better tomorrow. Do you have a plan?



My Days Creep By

As my days creep by
I try not to cry
I can't believe I'm back here doing more time
I feel like I'm losing my mind
I don't know what to do
Or how I'm going to make it through.
My days keep getting longer
And my nights even shorter
I have court every three weeks
For the judge to tell me I'm a failure
My PO and my dad tell me they have faith
My mom tells me to do my best and never give up
I don't know what to believe
Or how to achieve
My goals
I want to go home
California's not the place for me
Back to Wisconsin with all my family and friends
is where I need to be
Since I've been sober so much has changed
It's been seven months now
Since I've been down
My man is sober now, too
And has gained a lot that he could lose
We no longer fight
Or stay up all night
We're both going to school
And doing what we need to do
But I can guarantee you one thing
As soon as we're through with all the bullshhh we have to do
We're gonna bounce
I'm gonna go home
I'll finally be free and able
To flee to where I wanna be

-Big Bird, San Mateo

From The Beat: What's Wisconsin got that we don't have out here? Cows? We've got 'em. Cheese? We make it. Snow? If you head to the mountains, we've got that, too. Alright, fine — we're willing to let you go, but you've gotta hold up your end of the bargain first. What's it going to take to stay sober? Are there times when you've been tempted to hit the bottle again? When that happens, how do you resist the temptation?

To Be Or Not To Be

To be the discriminatee or not to be the discriminator? That is the question. My answer to that is I wouldn't want to be the discriminator because, first of all, it ain't right.

See, the meaning for the word discrimination is to make distinctions in treatment or to show partiality or prejudice. I know that discriminating against someone ain't cool, and I know I wouldn't want anyone doing the same towards me or my kids.

Since I've been in jail I've realized that discrimination leads to determination, and that discriminating against the next male or female will never get them anywhere in life. Like I said, discrimination leads to determination and I'm determined to strive and be better than those who discriminate.

Now, I wouldn't want to be the discriminator because I know that I wouldn't live long or get far because I would hate a whole lot of people.

I chose, so it's your turn. To be or to not be?

-Youn1, San Mateo

From The Beat: We especially like your reason for not wanting to discriminate against people — because you wouldn't want to be discriminated against. This "Golden Rule" approach ("Do to others as you would want them to do to you") seems to us to be an excellent philosophy for living your life with little strife, and making a positive contribution to the world.

MY day WILL soon come

People ask me "Shiek, why you always have an attitude?"

but hey, I just don't be in the mood
fast to go off and at times be rude
but then I think that shhh not even coo'
I just have to change my ways
keep a smile instead of a mug on my face
I have so much on my mind
and all I seem to think about is these crimes
and all my people doing time
Damn this is a shady world
it's gon' hurt for me not to see my mom have her last little girl
she's gon' be beautiful and brought into a lousy world
Why, Lord? Answer me
I can't wait until the day we meet
so you can tell me all the amazing things
about how you really became king
I miss my freedom so bad
that's something I wish I can have
but it's gon' be more then one time that I fall off task
But my day will soon come
I'm just gone keep asking the Lord
to bless my mom and her baby girl

-Shiek Da Sneak, San Mateo

From The Beat: In this piece, you capture many of the ups and downs, the hardships and hopes that you face, both on the daily and when thinking about the time you have ahead. What will it take for you to find that smile that will take that mug away? What can you do to make the world just a little bit better of a place when your baby sister is born? What wisdom are you going to drop on her? When you fall off task, from where will you find the resolve to pick yourself back up and get back on task again?

the common misconception

Life has its trials
And its tribulations
All we can do
Is stand and face them
With sword in hand
And souls of might
We face our fears
Prepared to fight
Yet, as we bound to the fray
Our fury alight
We see no enemy
No battle to fight
For fighting gets us nowhere
Which is hardly our goal
We simply need peace
Mind, body and soul
Thus our swords lay to rest
As we conquer life's test
For this test was not a chance
For blood, sweat or tears
But a chance to learn
For our coming years

-Conrad, Marin

From The Beat: Sometimes you have to fight to maintain the peace, Conrad. How do you feel about the wars the US is currently involved with? In Iraq? Afghanistan? Haiti? Colombia? If you think peace is the best state for the US to be in, what are you willing to do to help establish it in this country?

**I'm determined to strive
and be better than those
who discriminate.**



Un Consejos

Hola, les quiero dar un consejo a los homies que estan aqui. Esta es mi primera vez que estoy aqui y no me gusta que nadie venga a aqui porque uno sufre estando aqui.

Amigos, ponganse a pensar por su familia, miren como esoty yo sin mi familia. Estoy sufriendo porque no tengo a nadie porque toda mi familia está en Nicaragua.

Yo me pregunto, ¿por qué hay unos jóvenes que salen de aqui y regresan.? ¿Por qué ustedes creen que estar encerrado es un chiste?

No regresen, miren como sus madres sufren por ustedes.
From The Beat: Amigos deberian de seguir el consejo que nos envia Pinguino. Es la verdad, para que regresar al mismo sufriendo. Si ya la regaron, ya hicieron lo que quisieron o se equivocaron, pues ya esta hecho, ahora hay que pensar en salir de ese lugar y no volver jamás.

Advice

Hello, I want to give some advice to all the homies that are in here. This is my first time being in here and I do not like anyone coming in here because we suffer being in here.

Friends, start thinking about your families. Look at how I am doing without my family. I'm suffering because I do not have anyone because my whole family is in Nicaragua.

I ask myself, "Why are there so many juveniles that get out and then come back here?" "Why do you think that being locked up is a joke?"

Don't come back. Look at how our mothers suffer because of us.

-Pinguino, San Mateo

**I get into fights
because I didn't
know how to
walk away.**

I'm Sorry

I robbed that house because I had nothing.

I'm sorry for it now, but I can't go back and change it.

I robbed them just because I listened to my friends.

I get into fights because I didn't know how to walk away.

I didn't go to school because I was always talked about and

I just wanted to get away from it.

I knew if I was with my boys I would have to fight all the people who said something wrong to me.

So I just didn't go.

-Big Bill, Virginia

From The Beat: We praise you for being open and honest. It sounds like you have some shady friends and are easily influenced by them. It's hard to be alone and if they are your only friends it would be difficult to not be friends with them. But are they really good friends? Can you focus on being with family and find new friends that will actually care about your freedom, life and future? As far as school goes, we won't tell you to go because people are such haters, but we do encourage you to go to a GED preparation class and get your GED. Education is very important in keeping you free and successful.

Why do We write?

I write because I feel like that is the way for me to get away from the world. I feel as if everyone should write so that they can get stuff off their chest so they won't go out and get into anything.

In a lot of ways, I write about my life or how I want to be when I do grow up. Once I write it down it feels like I can just go out and do what I want.

When I first started writing I didn't like it very much, but then I got used to it. Most of the time when I write, I write about how I feel about a girl, or friends, and people in my family. This is why I write. What's your reason?

-Big Bill, Virginia

From The Beat: Thanks for telling us about the process you went through in making writing a habit. We strongly encourage you and everyone to take this good habit to the outs. Keep a journal. Life can be very difficult and having an outlet like writing can greatly reduce stress and improve your life. Other people and you have proven the benefits of writing.

Me Desespero En La Juvenile

Yo pienso cambiar porque no quiero estar en juvenile porque me desespero pensando en mi familia. No quiero escuchar que mis padres se murieron por dolor y sufriendo por mi culpa.

Ellos me quieren ver en la familia, pero nunca estoy con ellos. Siempre estoy en el bloque fumando Marijuana, haciendo dinero, y buscando a los enemigos. Me gusta hacer todo este tipo de desmadres. Pero les prometi a la virgencita que si me dejan salir el día de mi corte, que es el jueves, voy a cambiar, voy a agarrar un trabajo para salir adelante e ir a la escuela.

Yo reso todas las noches a la Virgencita y a Diosito que me ayude a salir de aqui. Quiero hacer esto por mi propia bolutad, y por mi familia porque quiero estar a su lado. Ya no los quiero dejar solo porque he estado encerrado cuantro veces en la juvenile.

Estoy peleando los cargos por los cuales me estan acusando. Me asusan que me robe un carro, pero yo no fui. Ya fui a corte varias veces y el jueves es mi última corte, y espero que si me dejen salir.

From The Beat: Es verdad, deberias de hacer algo por tus padres, nadie quiere que le pase nada a ningún miembro familiar. Haz hecho muchas cosas por las cuales se nota que estas arrepentido. Acuérdate que es muy facil prometer y no culpir. Hay muchos de los jóvenes que prometen cuando estan preso pero cuando salen en libertad se olvidan de las promesas.

Desperate In Juvenile Hall

I plan on changing my life around because I do not want to be in Juvenile because I feel hopeless when I think about my family. I do not want to hear that my parents died because of the pain and suffering they bear on my behalf.

They want me be with our family, but I'm never with them. I'm always on the block smoking marijuana, making money, and searching for my enemies. I like to do all the things I just mentioned, but I promised the Virgin Mary that if I get released on my court date, which is on Thursday, I'm going to change. I'm going to get myself a job so I can be successful and I also plan to go to school when I get out.

I pray every night to the Virgin Mary and to God to help me get out of here. I want to get out of here for my own good and for my family's, because I want to be by their side. I do not want to leave them by themselves anymore because I have already done that four times.

I'm fighting my case because I am being charged with grand theft auto, but it wasn't me. I've already gone to court three times and Thursday is my last court date, so I hope they let me out then.

-Jose Luis, 150 Crew



Peewizzle's Page

Peace Out

Saying goodbye to the
Hall I may have failed
But I'm rising now
Everybody's wondering
How just stay strong and
Don't do wrong
I may not be going home
To my moms
But I'm gonna be free
I paid my fee
And you see
No tears coming out
Of me
I didn't wipe them clean
I'm just tryin' to reach my
Highest peak
No more being a sneak
I'm not gonna stay up all night
Just to creep
No more missin' my sleep
I'm telling you I'm reaching
My highest peak
No more sittin' in my
Room just to weep
I'm losin' all my grief
Now I can speak
'Cause I'm free

-Peewizzle, San Mateo

From The Beat: What's the freedom that you've found? You're on your way to the group home, so we hope that you're not talking about the freedom of being out of the system — yet. We hope that you're talking about the freedom of coming to know yourself, of growing older and — more importantly — wiser through the trials and tribulations you've faced. What will you find when you get to the top of that peak? What will the view be like from there?

Fireball

She touched me by
Her words
Who cares if she
Got curves
Or not
She hit me on
The spot
Like I feel what
She feel and that's
Real, she can deal
She makin' her
Scars peel
Through her words
There's a seal
That everybody
Might not feel
But I do
She may be asking
Who? Who Can
Feel my heart my
Soul how cold
It was in this
Lonely place?
I may not have
Felt it but
I faced it
No one said life
Would be easy
Just remember
You're just not
Some guy's breezy
Dedicated to Fireball

-Peewizzle, San Mateo

From The Beat: Many Beat readers (including us here in the office) have felt the power of Fireball's words, and it's cool that you've taken the time to recognize her for the impact she's had on you. We also take the props you give to Fireball to heart, as it is proof of the power of the community of The Beat. Y'all teach, share, and support each other through your words every week.

to MY MOM

I may be strong
And I got that from
My mom some
Times she's calm
Other times she's
Droppin' that bomb
But in the end she's
Still my moms
I can count on her
Through thick and
Thin 'cause she's the
Only one who knows
Who feels me within
I feel like I've failed
But my mom still
Believes I'll prevail
I want to show her
I can succeed
But my mentality
Is stuck on
The streets
I wish I was there
With my mom when
She weeps even
Though it's all 'cause
Of me the only way
I'm truly free is
If it's just her and
Me, how much I wish
That can be.
Dedicated to my moms
Let her be strong
Through this rough time

-Peewizzle, San Mateo

From The Beat: This is a beautiful tribute to your mom, but the words aren't as strong a tribute as your actions can be. The best way to show your mother the love you feel for her and thank her for the support she's shown in to be there with her. Are you willing to give up your love of the streets for your mom?

goodbye

I guess this is a goodbye to The Beat from Hillcrest. I got kicked of my program, so instead of getting out in June when my seven months are up I'm going to a group home. I guess its coo'; it's better then being in here. But it's not goodbye forever — I'm gonna write from the group home.

I just want to take the time to thank everyone for being there for me and helping me get through the hard times. Jay (Broken Glass), thanks for everything and every wise word you told me; Pepa, thanks for caring and teaching me the way to get through my time faster; Iris, thanks for being a big bro' even though we're the same age; Lucy and Mary, thanks folks for being there for me through thick and thin; Paula and Ashley, thanks for all the helping info on everything and being there for me, especially wit' the magazines; Jacobs, alright then twin, I'll see you on the outs; Santana, you may be harsh sometimes but you still folks; Alex, thanks for everything you helped me get through and thanks for those talks; Capili, thanks for all them good times on independent studies — you too Gale; Dina, take care of that baby; and last but not least, Liz, thanks for everything — the secrets

you kept and that talk we had about out past, thanks for the things you did for me.

I'm gonna miss you all, and to Liz and Mary when you out do good. I'll be back in Redwood City soon. One more thing: I want to thank Mr. Sad'dat, Mr. Prince, Ms. Maclure, Ms. Prier, Ms. Page, Ms. Gutter, Big Swiss — thanks for everything. And last but not least, Ms. Mendoza, thanks for all the times you helped me out and helped me keep my head up and being just like a mom to me. Take care, everyone take care.

One last thanks: thanks Beat Within for being here to help me learn to express my thoughts and feelings on paper. Well, till pen meets paper, I'm out.

-Peewizzle, San Mateo

From The Beat: Man, we're sorry to see you go off to the group home, and we hope you're going to find a way to keep it cool and do your program. You don't know how meaningful your thanks are, and not just the thanks you give us (though that certainly feels good, especially right about now), but the thanks that you're able to give both peers and staff who helped you out in the Hall. Your piece goes to show that even though your are locked up, you're able to create a positive community, a support system made up of friends and authority figures — we hope you take the lessons you've learned with you to the group home and back to the outs.



Keep The Faith

have you ever had a constant
heart beat of pain
wanting to cry
blood rushing thru my vein's insides
shaking
feeling like your heart's breaking
it's slowly tearing apart
and that's hurting me even more
especially the roaring of thoughts
fighting with reality
then your heart and mind fought
because of decisions you ought to make
and chances you have to take
closing in on fate
because you have to face a world of hate
and the pain is so great
that it is deeper than a lake
and i can't see that everything will be okay
imaginary pictures don't help because it's
fiction
and i need something real
that i can mention
and depend on for my attention
now that is a mission that i have to
complete
it seems hard but not as much as
concrete
so therefore i can get through it
but it's goin' take time to do it
with no side-tracking in my way
i'm gonna keep the faith

-Tishay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Soldiers return from war with chests decorated by medals and awards, while you fight a war in your heart, mind, and soul — invisible, anonymous, and feeling alone. Where is your purple heart, your medal of honor? In the minds and hearts of those readers who, like you, struggle to change, to heal and maintain, and to escape the game! But when you feel shaky, you might try repeating the Serenity Prayer: "God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference." Meanwhile you're a shero, an inspiration — keep the faith!

Still Be Mine

boy you got me goin'
down memory lane
every time i think about you
blood rushin' through veins
boy i ain't goin' to lie
you got the best
even though you put a few pains
through my chest
but boy i couldn't
drop you nevertheless
well you neva got me in no mess
my memories got to me
before i even known it was me
it's like i was blind before i met you
but when i seen you i could see
i like you what you expect me to be
how you was holdin' me through the night
we were cuddlin' and you held me so tight
that it felt so right
but we were strong
neva got into a fight
we argued a couple of times
but boy you made my heart shine
and no matter what people say
you will be mine

-Tyresha, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Some will tell you when you get back together, you'll begin to remember why you broke up. But it sounds like your heart is ready to give it another shot. Maybe this time, you two will have it down. Some even say love is better the second time around.

Tishay, Young Gato, And Tyresha's Page

in this Life i Lead

My life is like a roller coaster so many ups and downs. Growing up in my gang infested hood kind of set my future. I gang bang to the fullest and there's no stopping that.

So far in this life there's been many problems i see. I keep telling my self I'm not coming back to this Hall and each time I lied. Somehow trouble always comes to find me and I end up in those filthy tanks waiting to go to a unit.

Every time I get released I don't take my freedom serious; I guess that's why i come back. I always run into my homeboys and they seem to have the same problem. That's just my life as a gangbanger.

To all the other homies, my advice is stay out the system 'cause once you're in it — it's like a hole and you keep digging your self deeper.

I wish I could start my whole life over but that ain't happening. So I ain't got no other choice but to play the hand I was dealt. Now I'm in the Hall missing my mom, lil' brother, and sisters. I know my girl is missing me because I miss her, but, that is the life I lead as a gangbanger.

-Young Gato, 150 Crew

From The Beat: As a gangbanger, do you choose to pick your homies over your family? Because that's exactly what you are doing. Think about the end result of this, whose really gonna be there? Who is worrying about you now that you're locked up? And, your girl can't wait for you forever; she needs to be a priority in your life. If she isn't a priority to you, someone else will make her a priority.

Life

my life
is twisted
remembering
when
i used to have
fun man
i tell you i miss
it
now it's all dried
up
i think i need
some blistix
my body fallin'
apart
i need someone
to help me fix it
my life
why do i risk it
running wit'
maniacs

in the street
but i thank god
i'm still on my feet
and after all
i have a relief
i just pray to god
can i please
have a release
but if i don't
i be left debris
but i do what i do
to succeed
to achieve

-Tyresha, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You may feel like a pile of debris, but what we see is style and dignity — the courage to change! So when you do get released, you'll remain free and achieve what you really want and need.

These Feelings Take Over

my whole body feeling worked
head hurting feeling irked
things are instantly ticking me off
like i'm losing patience
i'm getting anxious
i don't deserve this
i'm nervous
i'm quietly asking for some service
but keeping away until that day
because i know that it's here
but knowing my heart feels a different way
this feeling it just takes over me sometimes
and i don't know what to do
my mind is blind at times
i feel blue
my past coming towards me
like it was yesterday
i ask god for a better way
he knows i need him
and that's why he's here
i love that i have him near
if no one else cares
but for my pains mistakes and delusions
i'm still not losing
all though this stage is choosing
and keeps me in confusion

-Tishay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The very confusion, irritations, and sudden sad sense of losing — all this emotional turmoil just proves that you're working for real, changing your insides and starting to heal. It's like recovery from an auto accident and learning how to walk again; but it's your heart that's learning how to feel, drug-free and facing reality. And yeah it gets raw, flares up or shuts down, but it's getting stronger and healthier each go 'round. Just keep choosing what's right, and you'll win the fight to raise your life to a whole other level. Put your faith in God and watch out for devils. You don't deserve this pain, so don't return to its source again — follow your better plan!

MY Hard cold Life

The life I live is hard at times. I know it is just going to get tougher.

You see I started off cutting school, then came the drugs along with the gangbangerin'. Once I got into a gang I told myself I'm never going to get out. I don't want to get out in fact I'm not, that is the way I see things. I know that life is not going to do much for me but it is the road I took. So while I soak on a king cobra and smoke this weed I have no regrets on what I do. Right now I'm in the Hall missing the homies and my 'hood.

I guess ever since a child my only role models were gangbangers, even my own father along with my cousins. So living this life all I could do is hope for the best and prepare for the worst. Things will get better until I die or end up coming back to the Hall. What ever happens first, happens first and I'm out.

-Young Gato, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Do you care about your life? Do you love yourself? Ask yourself these questions. Where are you heading? What's in store for your future? You already know that this life is not going to do much for you, so why continue doing the same shhh? Can you change lanes before your road comes to a dead end?



Pastor J-Wizzle's Page

Chapter Three: Resurrected Trust

undesirable thoughts
in a resurrected truth
left in the dust
there is no one to trust
a sight for sore eyes
leaves in disgust
to you and me
this is a resurrected trust
living formerly as an habitual liar
seeing the rolling of the waves
these types of things
would have my daddy
twirling in his grave
from me to you
this is a resurrected trust
coming strapped with books
running around
trying to get a good look
leaving all my pain
on the hook
shake this resurrected trust
an american
with an outlawed mind
seeing as though truth
ain't hard to find
in this nature
my time
listen to the unjust
resurrected trust

-Pastor J-Wizzle, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Trust in what or whom? Don't let injustice kill your trust in you, since you've begun to live the life of one who manifests both justice and truth in all you do. Marry your heart to your mind, and let your life shine bright as these meditative lines.

thuggin' and bangin' will come to an end one day

pastor's prayer

oh blessed be he who prays
repent for your sins in any way
thuggin' and bangin' will come to an end one day
we reap what we sow
please be careful of the things you do
because they come back
with ten times the repercussion
coming so hard you feel your head bustin'
blessed be those who are bible readers
those are the ones who will be seeded for life

-Pastor J-Wizzle, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's a beautiful prayer, with a valuable warning to thugs who will listen. Reading the Bible, however, cannot substitute for compassion.

Millions of faces: man with No face

is it a black man
or a white man
or a latino man
there's no telling
he's a man with no face
he represents justice peace harmony
cruelty power fame shame pride
and happiness for all
me i can't call it
he has a face of change
he shall know this corrupt world
will never stay the same
listen to the chain gang
and the songs they sing
it brings pain joy and glee
to all those adapted to the family
he stands for similes never been told
this man will have stories to unfold
so these millions of faces
leave no spaces for disgrace
what and how does it seem to you
good-bye

-Pastor J-Wizzle, 150 Crew

From The Beat: One story of hell and a man who lives there: Sisyphus was condemned to push a heavy boulder to the top of a hill forever. For each time it reached the top, it rolled back down; and he had to push it up again. One day he realized, walking down the hill to begin again, that in this moment, he was completely free — and into this moment, he escaped completely.

Love, part two

love is looking in your eyes
never fails
in the event of my demise
to your surprise
your love will always rise
love is in your heart
pushin' and pumpin'
better than a thought
see what love has taught
a rise and fall with your love
truer than
the last of light in a bulb
prettier than a flower
your love has given me more
than enough power
sittin' on top of the tower
with you
loving you
leaves no clue
thank you
i appreciate everything
it may not seem so
but i do
and never let you go
me and you
plenty of time to grow
so now you know
i do love you

-Pastor J-Wizzle, 150 Crew

From The Beat: And this poem has sweet surprises, both in your twists of argument emphasized with rhyme and in your images (that light bulb!). Lovely little complex poem.



A Wondering Soul

it's like i am a corpse
with no spirit
some days i think to myself
my life should i
get rid of it
but morally i am
trapped
a wondering soul
castrated thoughts
boggle my
clouded mind
nowadays we shall
surely die
slow
so reach down low
to see if you can
touch
a wondering soul
hearts that are
deadly filled with pain
mentally waiting
dancing in the rain
slowly burning
running
from a wondering soul

-Pastor J-Wizzle

From The Beat: Have you read Keats' *Ode to Melancholy*? Or any Keats? You share something of his ability to turn depressive states into meditations redolent with an all but spiritual beauty.

Crystal

the most trespassing
transparent things
i see more than crystal
diamond jewel more priceless
than any wristwatch
lookin' at me look at you
makes the tickin' stop
crystal tryin'
to look through
most beautiful thing
ever seen
much more sight than the gleam
say what now
don't get creamed
crystal
high times bring
hard rhymes
lookin' through the sunshine
crystal stop the hustle and grind
don't go before your time
pretty cost paid the way
for the boss,
talkin' to you
lookin' for a toss
you not me
the one who shops ross
crystal pretty priceless
never been righteous

-Pastor J-Wizzle, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Yes, this poem dazzles with its rhyme, vernacular, energy, surprise and uneasy tension between form and content (light and heavy). And how 'bout that: "high times bring hard rhymes"! You're gaining your confidence now. Your closing couplet is priceless and righteous in bringing tears to our eyes.

Pastor J-Wizzle's Page

Love Is Pain

love drains my soul
pain brings
thunder ice cold
love has no
symbol
these emotions
come from the temple
pain brings
deceitful waves
baby girl your love is
what i crave
painful sights with sorrow
graves
your love simply calms
my rage
stuck inside
this beaded cage
filled with pain
sweetheart
your love is precious
so turn
another page
leaving me without love
others cannot decide
on my pain
valued in soul
i claim
evolving with the
pounding rain
intellectual
mind-seekers
shared with love and pain
maybe deeper
parallel to one's heart
absolutely sought
out with one
thought
imposed in a way to
disguise
never without love and rain
can i rise
— can you

-Pastor J-Wizzle, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your verse is so delicate, as your thought floats feather-like down the page, turning, twisting and twirling, at the slightest impulse of mind or heart. Ezra Pound said there are universally three types of poetry: *melopoeia* (poetry of sound, its musicality); *phanopoeia* (poetry where imagery predominates); and *logopoeia* (the dance of ideas in verse) — yours is a dance of sound and ideas!

**high times bring
hard rhymes**



Traviesa's Page

When Time Runs Out

what will i do when time runs out
will people get what i was all about
or will they talk bad 'bout me
and be glad that i was never free
from the truth an' the unknown i flee
but my past i will face — this believe
i will leave my footsteps when i leave
people judge at what it seems
then realize they want you on their team
i know what i'm saying sounds confusin'
but i'm writin' from the heart not to be amusin'
i'm learnin' to live life wit'out usin'
to deny what i'm about would be an illusion
but i'm gonna end this
an' pray when time runs out i will be missed

-Traviesa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Time ran out on your yesterdays, and you're leaving behind your old drug haze. But time's just beginning to unfold its treasures to the earnest young woman whose verse brings us pleasure because they are the songs of her heart!

recognize game

we continue to go
through struggle
getting arrested
staying in trouble
our lives lack structure
we're all confused
about our future
having guidance
is not for sure
the street is a sickness
wit' no cure
instead've going to school
we smoke a blunt
instead've living
we get drunk
this is a dead end
i'm speakin' true
recognize the game
before it recognize you
don't get locked up
in a six by eight room
when you can be out
lookin' at the moon
so make a change
soon —

-Traviesa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Every time we see another young person fall, especially one who's written in The Beat and all, it brings a tear; 'cause those sick choices brought them here. While there's no cure for the street, there is a treatment — fill up your life with positive things, places, and people. Structure each day that way.

dad

it's coo'
i don't need you
i will succeed
no matter wha' you
do
i will stand tall
and from me
you will not receive
any calls
so pretend like
between us
is a wall
and yo' absence
will not be
my fall
you were suppose'
to protect me
but instead

you leave me
in my time of need
that i can't believe
but still
i will succeed
because you
i do not need
so this was
a lesson learned
my trust
you will never earn
yo' daughter

-Traviesa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We feel your deep strength and your deep hurt in this poem. It is difficult when the child must be stronger and wiser than the parent. You have become that strong, wise child. Show yourself love, patience, care — and stay clean.

Pains In Life

Emotional — yo' feelings:
it's when yo' hurt and you
get sad, like feeling pain.
Physical — anything that
happens to yo' body that
hurts.

Mental — depression, self-
esteem, mental illness, etc.

Spiritual — when you feel abandoned by whomever you
believe in.

-Traviesa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: They're all so fluid; they flow into each other. Thank you for sorting them out for us.

caged

they lock us up in a cage
when we come out
we're full of rage
the judge don't care 'bout yo' age
we get played on our rights
and charged when we fight
we're timed wit' the lights
and never yes-or-no answers
always might's
first timers coming
sayin' this is tight
you're never safe here
there's haters everywhere
and staff rarely care
so you pick a staff you can bear
ms. johnson's always there
a little tip when you come here

-Traviesa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The first timer whose thinks this place is tight, will know better when s/he's spent more nights. Despite it all, you've grown and matured; we see it in your face as well in your words.

Drugs An' Drank

never thought i'd say
good-bye
you controlled me
wit' yo' lies
of happiness
and fun
freedom and
the sun
i thought yo' use
was right
you were wit' me
day an' night
caused me to be
irritated
an' fight
but i'm quitting you
an' now i see
the light
i peeped
yo' game
and i fell for it
what a shame
but i've changed
i'm not the same
now i'm gonna
live wit'out
yo' false fame
so good-bye
you will not infect
me
'cause i reject
you
can't you see
i'm breaking
the addiction
you no longer hold
my attention
so good-bye
as i mentioned

-Traviesa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Someday you'll look back and see, this was your greatest victory, hardest fought and hardest won — the point at which your new life was begun. But addiction won't give up easy. It will sneak up when you're sleeping, or angry, or lonely, or weeping. It'll say, "I'm back, your old friend." But stick to your resolve. That moment will pass if you don't answer the call.

Ms. H

ms h helps me wit' my problems
always there to listen
and gives you what you be wishin'
and when i leave
she'll be who i'm missin'
she's always there for you
you can count on her to speak true
she'll never give up on you
no matter what you do
to miss h

-Traviesa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We know it means a lot when a staff person reads words like these in the pages of The Beat. We thank you for your praise of Ms. H. And we add our praise to yours.



Acidic

The worst drugs
Are the ones that make you think
You're in a dream
You sit on his couch
Smiling naively
Thinking that these guys
Have true intentions
You look into one's eyes
Gray, pretty average
And place the glittering cube
Of sugar on your tongue
Tastes like chemicals
The mystical LSD
Creates a most terrifying
Experience
An hour goes by...
It's not working
This stuff is fake
But then...
Why are the walls moving?
Why is my skin tingling?
Baby...I feel different
You look into his eyes
As you kiss his sugared lips
And they are now electric blue
Doe eyes, doe eyes, doe eyes
With long black lashes
So so pretty
You feel your mind is slipping
Into psychosis
And now you know
There is no reality
Movies movies
Let's watch a movie
Let's watch 3,000 movies!
You laugh
Realizing they both
Have black hair
I think I'm in love
Baby, let me bite your lip ring
Red black blue white
Red black blue white
I want to die, or...
I want to fly
Where it's dark and cold
It's so hot in here
Hot in here...
Thinking laughter
Bells, bells, bells
I want a cigarette
OK, hold on
Give me a flicking cigarette!
Calm down, calm down
Jump up running
Fists flying
Then you're face down
They're pinning you down
Calm the flick down
Movies! Movies! Movies!
You're flickin' crazy!
Not crazy! Not crazy! Not crazy!

-The Antichrist, Marin

From The Beat: You're not crazy, but you sound so, so lonely. Do you think that people can be pathologically lonely? By that we mean that after being alone for so long, that you can feel weird being with someone else. When someone so much as touches your arm with innocent affection, you feel paralyzed, like someone is trying to make you their slave. When do you feel real? When you're alone? With someone else? Do you have any activities or hobbies that absorb you, so that you forget yourself for a while? Do you like to read? We already know you can write poetry and draw amazingly.

The Antichrist's Page

**Not
crazy!
Not
crazy!
Not
crazy!**

fear

I have known fear
Reflected in my eyes
Illusions of evil
Dangerously treading
Through my mind
In hooded cloaks of night
Expressed in white faces
With no sight
I walked through a windowed hall
With no places to hide
Sheer terror
Only imagined
Sweeping through me
Ducking under each window
Crying glass tears
Until I cannot breathe
Walking past a crowd of people
Feeling fingers pointed
At my back
But I turn around
And they're not really there
This is my fear
This is my paranoia
This is my obsession

-The Antichrist, Marin

From The Beat: Do you have any idea why phantoms of evil haunt you? What has frightened you so terribly? You never write about your family, your friends, your life before you came to Juvy. Who loves, supports, helps you on the outs? What do you like to do when you're free? Go to school? Work? What gives you joy on the outs?

Heart Of Ice

Feeling like I'm made of ice
A sculpted goddess formed to entice
But with no soul
Meant to hurt
With no heart
Meant to curse
Scream my name
In the damnation
Of their last gasps
Of salty air
While the smoky tendrils
Of death's hands
My ivory claws
Curl around their throats
My red tears
Of lives past taken
Hearts past broken
Splatter on the glassy window
Of their souls
Screaming of agony
Shatter once-felt emotions
Of childhood traumas
Results of cruel intentions
In the smallest shards
So may pieces scattered
I fear this heart of ice
Will never be mended

-The Antichrist, Marin

From The Beat: Your poems are exquisitely wrought, Ms. Antichrist. They're as taut, as if your heartstrings were about to break. Yet you never really allude to what has happened to you, for you to be so despairing. If you say your soul has been snatched, who took it? If you truly feel like a dead-at-heart beauty, destined to doom men, do you think you're also threatening to doom yourself? Can you find any hope or feelings for others you can nourish and let grow back, from whatever has hurt you?

**Crying
glass
tears
Until I
cannot
breathe**



Shannon's Page

Struggling To Breathe

Struggling to breathe
Soon to be
In a deep sleep
Anxious for eternity
Received after death
Waiting in anticipation at the gates of heaven
Tripping off of God's judging
Not sure if my sins are going to deny me
From being let in

-Shannon, Marin

From The Beat: Why do you say that soon you'll be in a deep sleep? You may have had a suffocating four years in and out of Juvy, but you still have your whole young beautiful life to live. What will you do? Go back to school? Move to another city? Travel? What kind of career would you like? How will you prepare for it? If you were God, how would you judge yourself? Some say God forgives all who are sorry for whatever they did and ask His forgiveness. What do you think?

Regrets That Forever Last

Tripping off the shhh that I just did
Denying the true knowledge
So there ain't no reminding
Nightmares of the past
Regrets that forever last
Gotta heal; present at church for mass

-Shannon, Marin

From The Beat: Do you think that you could ever forgive yourself? Could you learn from your experiences so that you don't feel regret, but relief?

Curiosity

Who wills me to twirl this pen?
Is it he whom some call devil?
Or he who runs heaven?

-Shannon, Marin

From The Beat: You ask a great question. What do you think?

A climate of struggles until the day to be

I have known that life seems to be vast
My future is eclipsed by the terrors of my past
I try to take two steps back
So I may have a better look
And a little time to relax
But sometimes I'm trapped
In a storm of troubles
A cloud of hate towers over me
Sharp bolts of violent lightening
Strike me with voltages of rage
Rain droplets of pain fall upon me
The damp atmosphere of loneliness
Seeps through my skin
When will I have the chance to see
The sunshine bright above me
And rainbows of joy balancing off of laughter from me
My friends and family?
Until then I'll be waiting, struggling and praying
For the day to be

-Shannon, Marin

From The Beat: Beautiful but sad poem, Shannon. You get closer to the bone of your emotions and express them more beautifully, tenderly and sadly than most adult poets. You obviously have a huge capacity for joy and pain. Basically, you love life. Can you learn to trust yourself by not sabotaging yourself, by fighting and whatever else brings you back to Juvy?

doomed

Fallen, broken, useless and fooled
Can't control the mood
Acceptable to be crude
To those emersed, doomed
A feeling of loss
'Cause the thoughts of ending this belief of failing
So compelling
Can't stand hurting
Hear cries from the streets
Screams from the pain of agony
Abuse like a curse
Emerge from beneath the dark hold
Put upon us from birth
A sinner forgiven by God's only son's sacrifice
Taken for granted by most
Dispersed from the idea of unity for peace
Reach for understanding
A key for almost everything

-Shannon, Marin

From The Beat: Great, dark, painful poem, Shannon. You are not a failure. What kind of resources do you have in the outside world? Any? Do you have any adults you can stay with, maybe rent a room and get a job and go back to school? Four years in and out of Juvy is enough, but if you want a life on the outs, you'll have to be willing to fight to get what you want and maintain it. No one can fight your battles for you! Remember, someone once said, "The Lord helps those who help themselves." And we at The Beat are totally with you!

Alphabet of feelings

Attracted to the
Blasting with
Curiosity so baffling and cunning
Don't yet possess the luxuries of the rich
Effort performed at best
Financial difficulties causing the majority of poverty
Guessing destiny
Horrors of the truth
Intimate with death
Juggling challenges
Keeping secrets deep within
Longing for happiness
Momentarily crazy
Non-believing in understanding
Oppositional towards authority
Pathetic at the mercy of meth
Quick to quit
Rest for eternity
Stuck in a mess
Test your quest
Unity — bring the need
Vanished without a trace
Wealth guarded by the upper class
Xylene spreading over bodies
Youth are to be
Zero heroes

-Shannon, Marin

From The Beat: Your poem is really interesting, especially in how you write about your impressions of yourself. You don't write specifically about what you've done that you apparently can't forgive yourself for, but whatever it is, it's hurting you. Can you at least try to understand why you did whatever? Go ahead and finish this poem if you'd like to. What solution to your life would you like to see?



Can You Grasp This?

Waves of agony hit and leave me
Trembling time after time again
Each set seems to be more powerful than the last
A blast
Of echoing screams slips from my lips
Bringing me to my knees
Cringing from every pained memory in the past
My hands reach up for another's grasp
But they soon drop back down
Left broken from a neglected touch
Minutes burn
While thinking of what I yearn
For so much
Where and to whom shall I turn?

-Shannon, Marin

From The Beat: Do you think that you will ever find someone who you can trust and depend on? Sometimes, you have to get through certain situations by yourself. When you overcome the struggle, you will see how much more independent you will become. You will feel a sense of freedom.

Shannon's Page

Consequence For A Little Something

I'm spinning into an abyss
Losing hope of winning
My enemies be grinning
Can't stand the feeling of being guilty
But willing to take the sacrifice
Do anything to have a little happiness
And pride
Usually leaving me with a price
That I must pay to play

-Shannon, Marin

From The Beat: Do you realize that essentially, you're competing with your best self, not anyone else? Can you cut your enemies loose and let them go? Do you agree that concentrating on them means they're dragging you down? What do you do when you're free? What happiness do you find when you're released? Does it sustain you enough to keep you free?

Where and to whom shall I turn?

Aren't These Justified Reasons To Be Upset?

Damn, I'm hella upset for many reasons:

- 1) Some detainee comes in the facility bringing crystal meth, which causes everyone to be put on lockdown, surprise searches, lectures, and then ends up getting off the hook.
- 2) Some other detainee comes in acting hella out of pocket, then gets caught up for some of the problems she causing and has the nerve to point me out on what I've supposedly done wrong, to use me as a scapegoat, just 'cause she can't handle her own medicine.
- 3) I might get another charge for smashing out my door's spyglass (window they can check you through.)
- 4) Relationships — I've finally made with some staff are now, I assume, are now terminated after all the years they've known me and all the times I've told the truth or helped them in some way or other. It's just trashed, just 'cause some person can put a good act on.
- 5) I'm being transferred to an out-of-state lockdown facility for not returning to a group home after a home pass.
- 6) I can't get a hold of my mom, so I'm worried about her safety, and even though I'm not living with her, I still want her to know where I am.
- 7) I also just found out, not by my sister herself, but by one of my foster sisters, that my little sister just got jumped and got a concussion out of it from some females who are jealous, 'cause their so-called "boyfriends" like and eye my sis.

To wrap it up, shhh, things just ain't no good for me and I can't stand that I don't have that much power to change some of these things and that the things I can change are happening slowly.

-Shannon, Marin

From The Beat: Do you think the counselors will watch the situation you described about other youth messing up and figure out what's going down? Do you think the staff will learn to trust you again, when they see that even if you mess up, you're still trustworthy? Can anyone help you find your mother? Can you find ways to make the best of your situation?

Usually leaving me with a price That I must pay to play

My Well-Deserved Prize

Oh, damn, I'm sprung again
Out of that boyish phase
Because now men catch my gaze
No more foolishness
It's all about the praise
Got the downest man of the block
Well-defined body
Enough tattoos to keep you confused
Voice so sexy and deep
Mind and personality at top peak
Keeping people on they feet
So well grounded on what he expects
Causing others to feel that they've been checked
Such a rep
Most don't dare to step
I even fear to use him like a pet
Which is a change for me
He whom I achieved finally after all that searching
My well-deserved prize
I seize

-Shannon, Marin

From The Beat: Men are not prizes, they are people. You do not own him — he's with you 'cause he wants to be with you. Do you think it's healthy to fear your man? Do you think that you two have a good relationship? Think about it...



Shannon's Page

Why do I do the things I do? Outing myself like a fool

Such Hurt Inside

Such hurt inside
I wanna hide
Why's there so much
Pain worldwide?
Rather be labeled mentally insane
So I don't have to take the blame
Hate to feel shame
Is it the right time to change?
And is it necessary for every way I behave
Scatter the flame
Tears that stain

-Shannon, Marin

From The Beat: There is so much pain worldwide, Shannon. Does it help to know that many, maybe most people and even animals in the world are hurting? Or does it make you feel more hopeless? You aren't insane. You're growing up. It does hurt to know about other people's pain, but can help you tolerate your own?

questioned ways

Why do I do the things I do?
Outing myself like a fool
Trippin' off the shhhh I can't undo
Wishin' for things that won't come true
Even considering to be down for red or blue
I gotta start fully thinking things through
Like, where am I going to be in life in a year or two?
And if I want to be doing things for me or you
So much in between
Not enough flexibility
Lord, can't you just help things go more easily for me?
Is it just too much to ask for a little granted time of joy and relaxing?
Why does the solution almost always gotta be
The struggle to be free?
Most often loss of sanity
Lasting only momentarily
Quit the tease
If that's what it's gotta be
Then keep me out of this world completely
I ain't frontin' on the real
Let me loose from this agony and torment
Just speak the word "release"
Please set me free

-Shannon, Marin

From The Beat: You really do "out" yourself, Shannon, which is part of your charm. But you have to remember that most people's first loyalty is most often to themselves, not you. Part of growing up is realizing that you have to assume responsibility for yourself, especially if no one is helping you. It can be difficult, to grow from a girl to a woman. You're almost there. But you don't need to affiliate with any colors to complicate your identity, and you don't need any more mess in your life. We hope that some day all the pain and loneliness you've already known will make you stronger and your life richer in some way. It's already made you a wonderful poet!

**Bleed what I've
bled
Cry the tears
that I've shed
Feel the
heartache of
loneliness I've
felt
Deal with the
burn of agony I
was dealt
Expect the
humiliation I
expect**

step into MY shoes AND see if they fit

You must be crazy to think that it's easy
To become what you all want me to be
Can't anyone understand why I have strong feelings
Of revenge for my enemies?
Just step aside, watch and you'll see
There's justice in my deeds
I'm more than an angry, lunatic, demon seed
There's a young girl here
Who's just tired of being abused repeatedly
You can stand at my level and speak to me as an equal
After you've gone through what I've gone through
Bleed what I've bled
Cry the tears that I've shed
Feel the heartache of loneliness I've felt
Deal with the burn of agony I was dealt
Expect the humiliation I expect
Accept turned heads from those you seek help from
But who wish to pay no heed
For your troubling needs
When you receive all of these treatings
Then take the time
Imagine out of your head
That you're any better than me
Or anybody you seek to punish or to judge
For a lost cause or dead
Can you grasp what I've just said?

-Shannon, Marin

From The Beat: You've probably suffered more than most women way older than you are. It's given you a wisdom and compassion, as well as humor and a sense of fun, most young women don't have. But the questions you're asking, like where you want to go from here, are essential. What do you want for yourself? Until you make up your mind, people don't know how to help you.



"Culture Shock"

Love them forever

Growing up in the hood wasn't even all-good
when I was young mom and pops never gave me anything in my life.
When I was five all I ever had were dreams
having a diamond chain and rings,
things that bling.

-Lil' Bobby

From The Beat: So, what do you want today? Hopefully more than the material things you write about in this little poem. How are you gonna make your life better? We encourage you to go for your dream! Do it legitly, go to school!

MY culture

I like hip-hop because that is my life and no one can change my life.

I am an African American. My family and I have a good relationship because I love them very much and I don't want to leave them alone.

My mom and my dad are from Oakland, but my other dad is from somewhere else. Yes, I get beatings, so what, everybody gets beatings.

Yes, I want to change my life because I am in jail and I don't like it.

When I get out I am a street gangsta, I am a ripper and that's the way I like it. Do you hear me? That's the way I am going to live. I am a rapper, and I do love my family.

-Rolonte

From The Beat: Oh yeah, we hear you... Do you think that the things you do on the streets can get you in jail? If you don't like jail, figure out what's bringing you there and do something about it.

What i want

Yeah couple of times people tried to tell me who I could kick it with or the girl I could be with. But that didn't stop me from being who I want to be or seeing the girl I want to see. I still did what I wanted to do.

-D

From The Beat: You know, sometimes the reason why young teens or people in general are getting into trouble is because of the people that they kick it with. You have to choose your friends wisely! Everyone can't be your friend. There are friends that are good and friends that are bad. What kind of friends do you have?

My Dream

i plan to use my intelligence
to get where i can
because the stuff i'm learning
here
is teaching me how
to be a real man

-Rasheed

From The Beat: A man prepares himself for later life. Take what you've learned here, back to school!

I Look

i look at these staff
and i see the success
they have made
and how much
they talk about
they get paid
(but it's not only the pay)
if they can do it
i can too
the question is
what else can i do

-Rasheed

From The Beat: Stay free, get your degree, and there will be job opportunities.

I get
beatings,
so what,
everybody
gets
beatings.

in Life

i want to become
something that i'm not
because sooner or later
i'm gonna get off the block

-Rasheed

From The Beat: "Sooner or later" always means later. Don't wait. The way you live on the block, tomorrow could be too late.

Dread Culture Shock

I have had a relationship with a different culture, but no one made big deal out of it.

On the other hand, when I went to go get a job, they said that I had to chop off my dreads and shave my face, but I told them I'll find another job.

When you are riding around with some friends and the police pull you over just because you have a car full of people, they think you are in a gang.

-B'Z

From the Beat: People are definitely prejudice sometimes. Do you think it was that they wanted to maintain a "professional" atmosphere and you were not a good fit? It's hard to tell. There are some places that will be accepting of your style. You got to keep looking next time until you get that job. If you really want to live legit, you will do what it takes and sacrifice the superficial.

Change

i would love to change
i feel i am a bad example
for my two-year-old brother
and my eleven-year-old sister
i want them to be able to
look up to me as a big brother
who has their back
and who can teach them
the good things in life
i also want to change
to be able to be a movie star
and just to start doing well
and take care of my mother
and my older sister too

-Mark

From The Beat: Those are some good reasons to change. But do you want to change, for you? Are you sick and tired of where your life takes you and what it does to you? For change to really stick, they say you have to do it for you. You have to want it!

To Change

I could change in many ways! I just got to have the desire and the heart to do that, which I do! I will soon! That don't mean I ain't gonna represent the turf!

I'm talkin' about go back to school and graduate, stop doing crimes and things that put me in these kind of positions that I'm in now! I will if it's not too late.

-Lil' Rickie

From The Beat: It's never too late until it's too late!!! Think about that... You have to start now while you have air to breathe. You know waking up in the morning is another blessing that God has blessed you with! A lot of people don't even wake up the next morning, and they might have wanted to change, but it was too late. Tomorrow isn't promised to anyone and death has no respect for any human being, so make that change while you still have life before it's too late. What are you going to do in order for you to change? When are you going to start?

Changed By The System

When I was in a group home an' Camp I been through all this stuff. Like ankle monitors, home supervision, and when they start to talk about CYA in court that kind of changed my mind about things.

But that doesn't mean I'm going to stop doing my thug thing. That's the game; it ain't gonna stop, you understand me?

-One Love

From The Beat: Throughout all your life you're going to have to make life-altering decisions and homey this is one of them. Ask yourself, where has the game gotten you? Do you control the game or does it control you? You can't keep doing the same shhh and expect different results.

go back to school
and graduate

Haitian Shock

When I found out about Haitian and Jamaican culture, I never knew that it was all Black countries that close to America.

Then I started studying about what my people had to do to own their own islands and for the White people to leave them alone.

-Haitian

From The Beat: Are you forgetting your people's struggle? How can you make it so that their fight didn't go in vain?

Successful

i want to be successful
because i have dreams
of being someone
that i couldn't become

-Rasheed

From The Beat: Without a high school degree, it's hard to succeed. So get back in school and become who you want to be!

Sometimes

Sometimes I hang on the corner and don't do anything but sell dope and give it to people that want it. They come back and I give it to them and they would give me that money so I can get paid.

I can't walk without no money so I can be somebody, so I can be me and that's Moe. But my first name is Mario, but you can call me Moe.

-Moe

From The Beat: As you sell dope, not only do you cheat others out of their lives (you're selling poison) but you also cheat yourself out of your freedom. Who's playin' who?



Culture Clash

Sometimes culture don't mix, and that's the truth. Cultures like hip-hop use the culture of apple pie America.

Apple pie America does not get along with any culture, it seems like, and they run the California jail system. So you know how hip hop culture filled with black and brown. Now look at the jail. What a coincidence!

I got my own culture, so I'm coo'.

-Mark B5

From The Beat: What do you mean when you say that hip-hop uses the culture Apple Pie America? And, what do you mean when you say you have your own culture? How would you describe your culture?

All Our Cultures

I think my culture is interesting, because the Mexicans have too many cultures, and they celebrate with food and the Aztec culture. That is important.

I want to have a better life when I go outside of here, and work to have money and help my family.

-Eduardo B1

From The Beat: What kind of work do you want to do, Eduardo? Does America have its own culture, or is it just a collection of many other cultures?

"Culture Shock"

Get It Together

Man, it is going to be a culture shock for the black people if we don't make a change. White people sit back and laugh at us 'cause they want us to kill one another. Then they set us up with three things: they marginalize, criminalize and institutionalize.

So it really is not a way for us. That's why we got to change. Everybody got street game, so let's get some school game and put that together, and make real good money.

-Li' Carl B1

From The Beat: You recognize that people are getting set up, so what are you going to do to help other people recognize? Do you think all white people are laughing when they see (black) youngsters killing (black) youngsters? Is it possible for different races to work together to achieve something for all? Without working together, do you think any race can prosper?

Racist Parent

Yes, I had an associate that was White, and he was cool. But, his father was a racist. When I found this out, my mom was like, it ain't cool to be around him. At first I didn't listen, until I realized that this kid I was around may be a racist himself.

-Mackey B4

From The Beat: What made you think your friend might have been a racist? Why would he be your friend if he was a racist? We understand your mother's concern about your friend's father, but maybe through your friendship you could have been the teacher your friend's father needed to correct his ignorance.

Gettin' Hitched

My culture is, if you have a girl and you're fourteen, you have to get married. So if you don't want to, you have to move out of the house.

-Ricky B1

From The Beat: Wow, that's really young by our standards. What culture do you come from?

My Life: Money, Sex, And Livin' It Up

Once upon a time in Nevada lived a young kid named Checker. Checker was Chest's son.

Well, one day Checker was sleepin' at his house an' he heard plap, plap, plap, plap. Checker was only fifteen. His scared lil' heart was racing. He ran to the door in his room and shut it. From there he hit the alarm system in his room. Then he went into the attic from his room, and double bolted the panel.

In three minutes he saw five cop cars surrounding his house and heard a helicopter. He immediately broke the window and ran to the roof. At the ledge, he hit a triple double back flip onto the police car. They shot, hit him killing him instantly... to be continued.

-Peter B5

From The Beat: There are many reasons we want to read the rest of this piece. Of course, we want to know what happens after the police kill Checker. But we also want to know how the title of this piece still be explained. So far, there is no money, no sex, and no livin' it up. We're waiting.

"Experiences"

My Plan For Change

Hello. This is to all of you on how I plan on changing. It's an easy answer, but a mild task.

I'm not frightened to use new ideas to deal with life's problems because I know that life is measured by what you accomplish. In order to survive you have to take some steps to grow bigger an' better.

I plan on stopping all if any contact with places like here unless I come calling or writing to keep in contact wit' my fam-bam (an exclusive circle of intelligent people), an' that only.

-Peter George B5

From The Beat: Well, PG, we admire your goals, but we don't see the plan that will take you there. How will you stop all contact with places like this? What changes do you plan on the outs? How will your freedom be different this time than in times past?

New Places

My experiences that caused me to change was when I came to this country. It changed the way I am. It changed the way I dress. It changed the way I talk.

-Emmanuel B1

From The Beat: Do you think it changed you for the better or worse? Do you miss your old country? Where did you come from? Would you like to return there some day, either to visit or to live? Can you describe the particular changes you went through?

MY Life is realer than some

My life is real and then some. Some people say they do stuff but they don't some people go through more stuff then me dat I know my life is realer than some.

-Jamoe B4

From The Beat: What does it mean to have a "real life?" Isn't everybody's life real to them? What makes one life realer than another?

Killing In My Community

Lots of killings have happened in the past 2-3 years and I am really not feeling it. One of my ninjas got shot by a security guard for nothing; my ninja died for nothing. One of my ninjas got killed in Sunnydale, another got killed in a club. But this stuff I really don't feel at all, not at all.

I feel sorry for the mothers, I wish I could give them anything they want.

RIP Gator, Keno, J-Rich and Gangsta.

-G GU

From The Beat: We understand why you wouldn't be feeling all those killings. You can't give those mothers whatever they want, but could you contribute to making the streets a safer place by changing how you act? For instance, what about the name you signed and we changed? How does it and what you do contribute to the killings you don't like?

A Changed Gangsta

I'm a changed gangsta. I go to school and I try to do good too, but when someone makes me mad, then I change into a new person.

-Jamoe B4

From The Beat: We like the first change, the one that has you in school and trying to do good. What makes you mad? When you get mad, describe how you change.

Fits Or 'Hood? Both

Keep it gangster, ball out, bang drugs out the drug house. Fancy cars, on spinny thangs. Long linked gold chain with a chopper medallion with them diamond thangs. Gibeaus pants, Air Force Ones and throwbacks.

Man, I'm living fat, hundred dollar bills in the pocket, keep it gangsta still up in the ghetto. In the ghetto you will mess around and see nice rims on a Pinto. It's called living ghetto fabulous.

-Jd B5

From The Beat: Aren't you leaving a few things out of your description of "living ghetto fabulous" — like coming back and forth to the Hall? Like risking spending the rest of your life in a wheelchair or going to your grave early? Like rising putting someone else in a wheelchair or their grave? Like modeling for the young boys (and girls) who look up to you "Big Homies" for inspiration? Come on, JD. It's time for you to step up, grow up, and get yourself up out of here.

Change

Me really personally, I changed. You could make people think you can change by your presence and the way you treat them, but really you're lost and feel bad about yourself on the inside.

You ain't changed until you feel like you changed on the inside. Don't go by anybody's word!

-JD B5

From The Beat: How would you describe the changes you've experienced? What brings a person to want to change? And then, what moves that person from wanting to change to the next level? Is change a process or a point in time? We'd be interested in reading your thoughts on the subject of change.

I feel sorry for the mothers, I wish I could give them anything they want.



Changing in Life

When I was twelve years old I was hanging with my friends. We stole cars from gangstas, we stole drugs. Then my friends got caught. They told them I was the one doing all of that. So the gangstas went and looked for me because they wanted to beat me up.

So I was thinking I'm going to get killed. Then my life changed because I thought my life was going to end up like that. So my life changed, and I was with my family. I was doing good going to school, and doing the best in life.

-Lovo

From The Beat: So what happened? If you were going to school and doing good, how did you end up here? Do you think you have to make more changes in your life to stay free? What do you plan to do when you get out of here?

change

I really think that nothing caused me to change. I remember in the first grade I was nothing, but trouble. I chose to be bad because I just thought it was the thing to do when I was little. It just popped in my head and that's when I started making trouble.

I think the reason why I am like this is because I see people doing something then I start doing it. At school in the first grade I seen so many people fight, and I just started to do it.

Beatin' up people made me change because once I put hands on somebody, most likely that person ain't gonna mess with me no more. That's why I'm in here, for beatin' up somebody and putting 'em in a coma.

-Kt

From The Beat: It seems strange to us that you would start getting into trouble in the first grade. Do you remember what your life was like before you even started the first grade? Was there drama in it even then? If beating people up can land you in jail, then maybe it's time to come up with a new strategy. Your "victim" is in a coma and you are in jail. It sounds like a lose-lose situation to us.

"Experiences"

Things That Made Me Change

The experiences that have changed me was hanging with he wrong friends. Ever since I started hanging with them I've changed.

I started smoking pot, started drinking, and getting into fights. Then I stopped listening to my parents, but I've been paying consequences for these crimes, like getting arrested and going to juvenile hall.

When I get out I'll change my ways because I don't want to end up in jail when I'm older. It's worse than juvenile hall, and there's bigger people. That's all I have to say.

-Cookie Crisp

From The Beat: You're right about those bigger, badder places they have waiting for you. And we're encouraged to read that you're going to make the changes you need to make to avoid them. (And, by the way, what will those changes be?) At the same time, though, we have to ask what caused you to hang out with the wrong friends to begin with? How do you find the right friends? What makes a good friend?

It All Started . . .

It all started when I was eight back in '94 living in the crazy 'hood in Redwood City — it was off the hook! Pero (but) at the same time, it was a disaster.

Well my homegirl, who at the time was seven years old, she took me to the 'hood and started wearing gang colors all the time. They used to call me La Shorty 'cause I was a youngun in the 'hood. Well pues (then) I started getting deeper and deeper and still was kickin' it with the OGs older than us. And then when I was twelve, I started hating my own carnal 'cause he was my rival, and all my cousins too.

I started being all bad: smoking, drinking, gang bangin' and always be en las calles de (the streets of) Redwood City. I couldn't see my carnal 'cause I was taught to hate on them, and so I kept doing what I was doing — jumping, hurting, stealing, makin' people suffer. Well time flew by and I was getting deeper and older and being more open-minded and getting more street knowledge.

Well when I was a teen, I started smoking el crystal with my "raza" — the cholos from my 'hood — and running from my canton (house) just doing the "gangster way," and I'm the kind of chola that don't give a damn about nobody but mi familia.

I'm just a down ruca (girl) that all my homies likes to kick it wit' 'cause I keep it real — I don't play youngstas lil' games, that's on the real. Like my homegirl says, run up or shut up, and that's real. I don't talk. I hate talking. Talk is cheap and words don't bring me down. I don't care what jainas say about me, it's nothin' to a savage!

Well then again, I was doing dirt out there and I regret some of them. Pero simon then I store my carnalas ranfla (car) and got caught for the first time and got put in Juv. I did two months and again I wasn't planning on changing for nothing — I was the same and I guess I got deeper 'cause I went out and still did dirt. But then I got jumped for my real tag name that now is Mona.

I never got jumped in pero they were saying that I was more than just a regular Mona. I actually was in the gang pero not jumped in, and plus I was doing savage things that the other rucas from the clicka wouldn't do. So I was part of the familia porque suppose they cared about me, so that's why they didn't want me to get hooked in.

Pero then I turned fifteen in San Mateo County Jail. It was all bad for me 'cause I was gonna get a quincianera (special birthday party) but I didn't, and I didn't want quincianera cause I was a chola loca. Y desmadrosa chale (Damn that's crazy), that don't sound good, pero that's what I was.

Now I'm a firme ruca, backing my real familia up. That's my jefita y carnales y primos. Then I turn sixteen again in jail and started thinking that pandillas (gangs) ain't no joke and that I didn't want to live that vida loca no more, 'cause it was too much for a jaina like me. I could do my desmadre (thing), pero clean and sober and clear in my mind.

Now I'm still living la vida loca and I'm living it grande. I'm doing big things. And I forgot to mention I stopped gangbangin'. I don't claim stupid colors or numbers no more, I'm straight and through wit' it. Pero I'm still live my vida loca, my crazy life, that now I could call it loca cause now I know what the hell I'm doing. I'm all about backing my people up. I talk to my cousin and carnales now without calling names or disrespecting us. They are still down for their pride por vida pero my carnal stop gangbangin' for he's carnala Mona. Now we do things that no other raza would do.

I got much love and full respect for my carnal and my cousins! And now we all love each other pero I hate cutting this linias short pero this is not it. No es toda la real and true story about la Mona I got one hundred more lives pero this is just the beginning of my historia de mi vida loca, and now I'm seventeen years old and still viviendo (living) la vida loca, que no?

Mi vida loca por vida this is dedicated for my people you know who you are, que no? If you don't, well it's you — whoever is reading it. I don't care what you claim — much love and respeto for those out there or in here, que no. Ai los wacho (See you later). Alrato.

-Mona

From The Beat: As we read through this, we feel the urge to respond in contradictory ways. One is to give you big big props for seeing beyond the surface level of gang ties. It takes someone big to step up and admit that those who you were taught to hate are now your friends (and were always your family). How were you able to step away from the gang ties that so many claim are impossible to leave? The thing that we're troubled by is your devotion to la vida loca. How do you define la vida loca now that you've dropped colors and sets and gangs? What does it mean to you to live la vida loca?

Blame Yourself

Why should I blame others for participating in my organization? Why blame others for the high degree of violence I use? I do what I do because I love to do what I do. I can't blame others, nor can I blame the area I grew up in.

Is incarceration my future? Only I know, by my mentality and how I feel and what I do. If I fail, I'll die and rot in jail, and if I succeed, I'll burn in hell, so either way I'm screwed in these streets.

I have no remorse for the things I've done. Why, I always ask myself. I can't blame anything or nobody, but myself.

-Boxer

From The Beat: It seems to us that you are saying you live for the momentary thrill you get on the street, and that you don't really consider the future. Can you imagine a future for yourself, free from the pull of the streets and free from the grip of the criminal justice system? You say you can't blame your environment for the choices that you make, but where do those choices come from? Is there any way to succeed that doesn't involve burning in hell? All we know is that by the path you have set yourself on, we expect you will have far more experiences as a slave than as a master. There are close to 200,000 Californians in our slave empire we call the Department of Corrections. Will you just be one more?

Why I Do What I Do

I do what I do because I want and have to. I take my enemies out the game before they can do the same to me because I have to. I get fast money because I have to, and it's the only way I can survive and feed my loved ones that don't have it all.

If you were in my shoes you would do the same thing.

I smoke that good green because I want to. Shhh, I have to do something with all this stress in my life, 'cause getting on my knees don't always help my cause.

I speak the truth on this piece of paper because there's nothing else for me to do.

I stay with a pistol because I have to, and if I get caught without a pistol that could be my life.

So just like I said, I do what I do because I want and because I have to.

Will there ever be peace in my life? I don't really know, but I hope so.

Till that time comes I'm gone hold my head up and stay strong.

One love to all my ninjas out there. I might not touch down for minute 'cause they trying to send your boy to CYA. But wherever I go I will never fall.

-Young Vell

From The Beat: We've been down this road before, Young Vell. You say you have to do all these things that led you to come to the Hall (and which will certainly lead you to bigger, harder places). You say that praying doesn't get you what you want, so you have to live the fast life. Then you say you smoke trees to relief the stress of that same life. Do you see any connection between the life you lead and the stress you suffer? We're not sure what we would do in your shoes (and we can't and won't judge you on that basis), but we can't really believe that you "have to" do what you do. We think you are exercising choice in the matter, and that there are other options available. We admit that they are difficult choices, but are they more difficult than being in here? Are they more difficult than what you might face at the Y? We'd like you to answer one question for us, Vell. If something terrible happened and you found yourself confined to a wheelchair, would you look back and say it was all worth it, or would you look back and wish you had made different choices?



"Experiences"

juvie made me change

when i went to juvenile hall
it was an experience
that really made me change
from doing the bad things
that i used to do
that could get me put in jail
so it was a bad experience
but at the same time
it was good
because now i don't
do things that can get me
put in jail

-Lil' V

From The Beat: If you try to play around the edges of "bad things" — thinking you're safe from jail because you only hang with criminals; the experience of others tell us you'll be back. You need to change your whole way of thinking. Have you?

Realization To Change

An experience that helped me change, was coming to the hall. Every time I come to the hall, I change a little bit. I get smarter — and try not to make the same mistakes and come back for some bull.

This time I realized that I'm about to be eighteen, and I need to get my shhh together before I end up in the pen. I need to start makin' a plan before I end up locked up for a long time.

-Almost Grown

From The Beat: If you're not making the same old mistakes, you're making progress. Yet, it may be time for a big leap, so that when you're eighteen you can make that fresh start last. Don't try to get your game tighter, try to get your game righter.

Group Home Change

An experience that I've had that has caused me to change is when I went to a group home for the first time, it was in East Oakland by Oakland Zoo.

When I got there it was cool at first, but after a couple of weeks I was ready to leave because I wasn't comfortable living with other people besides my family.

-Myron

From The Beat: It's difficult to adapt to a different way of living. But how long can you run? We don't know if you were responsible for the crime or violation that put you in the hall/group home but if you were, how can you face the consequences and get the time over with so it won't keep going and going and going? We wish you real freedom.

Dead Homies

How do you live with the stress of seeing people you care about die?

Ain't no stressing. I keep my head high, as I do when I'm off the purple stuff. I know a lot of friends that passed away.

One of my close friends got shot the other day, but while I'm locked down, that's all I think about is my folks that I've lost in these Oakland city streets, because of guns and drugs. One love.

-Twan

From The Beat: Do you think that all of the murders in Oakland go in vain? Why or why not? Why do you think that the city of Oakland has such a high murder rate? Why do you think cats are so ready to kill or die over money, drugs and materials?

sunday obituary

Q-Vo readers this the story of my life and my death.

As you read, try to relate to my experiences
and stop and think if you haven't been seriously injured yet...

Think before you react of become another name in the Sunday morning obituary.

Thanks for your time.

God Bless. Muchos gustos (Much happiness to you all)

-Ben

From The Beat: Good message. No one thinks it could be them but everyone is mortal. And if someone keeps setting themselves up, it increases their chances of an early death.

When things went bad

I remember an experience when my grandpa passed away. It changed me, because now I have an attitude that I don't give a ... anymore. And another time when a couple of homies got smoked, that messed me up!

It got me paranoid — thinking I could be the next; packing a throwaway; getting off on sight of an enemy at all times, if you got a good homie from the hood. It's mandatory where I'm from, if you don't want to be next.

-Lil' Payaso

From The Beat: Losing someone you love is hard, but it should remind you of how important it is to be there for your loved ones while they're still here. And as for "packing" and "getting off on sight" — it will cost countless lives on both sides, and will put you at far greater risk for death or Life in prison.

changes

The experience that caused me to change was my family. 'Cause my family's going through hard times right now because I'm locked up and my brother is locked up, too. So my mom is stressing for both of us!

I got to make a change so I don't see my mom stress for the wrong decisions I made. I hope that when I get out, my mom could see the changes I'm about to make — but no matter what I'm still a gangster.

-Young Giggles

From The Beat: If you cling to living the life of a gangster, the system will cling to you — and you will bring your mother heartache for the rest of her years! If you think we're wrong, then tell us specifically what changes you intend to make.

Freezing Experience

I have had an experience that made my body freeze up. When someone tried to rob me with a pistol, but because of my brainpower, I got away just in time.

An experience that most people have in their life is when you go and see the judge and he gives you that 25 to life for attempt murder, that makes you think, "Ha, I might as well, and got it over with."

-B'Z

From The Beat: Thanks for your honesty but do you really mean all that or is it your hopeless screw-it-all response to your dismal circumstances? Do you think life is valuable? What would you say to a kid about what you believe in, and how he/she could prevent seeing a 25 to L? We wish you the best in your situation.

RIP Grandpa

I never met Grandpa before, but I heard a lot about him. I know that he was a good artist.

He committed suicide because his wife had a divorce with him. He couldn't cope with his pain, so he committed suicide. It hurts me. I really want to meet him. I heard that he was a nice person. RIP Jo Lowell.

-Lil' Dirty

From The Beat: We're sorry you didn't get to meet your grandpa and that he didn't get to meet you. In the recovery meetings, people say, "Suicide a permanent solution to a temporary problem." RIP Jo Lowell.

Live & Learn

i remember on halloween
when i was in the car with my brother
and the police had got behind us
and my brother kept goin'
so we got in a high speed chase
and we could have got' killed
because he was doin' like a hundred
and almost hit hella people
so now i don't get in the car
with people that are on the run
or don't have their license

-No Name

From The Beat: Did you forget to put your name? For sure, this piece deserves credit. Good story. Good conclusion.

MY family

My sister is dead.

I am dead without her.

My mother is one step from being dead.

I will help her to be alive.

I thought it was so easy but it is not easy to keep them alive, but I am trying my best to do it.

-Rolontei

From The Beat: We feel deep pain here, but we don't quite understand exactly what you mean. Can you go deeper into it?

Going Through It

I'm locked up in jail till the 16th. I'm in my room thinking about my mom and how she felt when she heard about the robbery. She was like, man!

Then I'm like shhh, how I'd get into this? Then she was like, when you get out you gone catch my fist. Then I was like, I wish I could go home. I'd rather be there than this cold ass room for the day.

Man, I'm locked up. I'm hella mad. I got all my family at home sad. When I get out, I'm gon' be glad but until then, I'm gon' kick some ass. But one more thing, RIP Jay-Jay.

-Davon

From The Beat: If you are so concerned about your family, then why would you be tripping off "kicking some ass" when you know that you will get more time added. Think about that.

Repeating Experiences

Someone could do something so mean to you that it will cause you to kill them. Then if you kill once, you would say, "why not again?" It's just like stealing land, you get away — you would try again.

-Larry

From The Beat: This is a good point. If you don't get caught the first time or the next, you might think you're invincible. But eventually if it's not the system that catches up to you, it's bad luck. Larry, do you believe in that saying, "what goes around comes around"?

Hurts My Heart

My name is Kev and I am a fourteen. I've been in the system since I was twelve years old. I spent my thirteenth birthday in Juvenile Hall.

It hurts my heart when I look back on the things I've done and this is my 9th time in this Hall and my first group home that I am going to and I just want to go home. But we can't always have it our way when we're having too much fun, so probably God had to stop it.

-Lil' Kev

From The Beat: It's very sad to spend your birthday in Juvenile Hall, but it's up to you if you want to spend your 15th birthday in there. What do you need to change about your life on the outs so that you can enjoy future birthdays and holidays?



The Thing That Made Me Change

Well, a lot of things have made me change, like when I got my first pair of dubs. The reason is that when I did not have them, people did not turn their heads. But now, all of a sudden, all the girls want to rim chase, (girls know what I mean).

If you went to Fremont High in Oakland you have seen me before. That is why I will not stop for them chasing girls; I just let them turn heads and hope for me to stop. For all you rim chasing girls, you will never get no love. You are just a soft run to me.

-Tramaine

From The Beat: Why would dubs change you? Are you materialistically motivated? Do you think you'll ever find a girl that likes you for who you are and not what you have? Was this change for the better or...?

When My Ninja got killed

An experience that changed me was when my ninja, ANT, got killed. That was my big bra. We used to be on the turf together everyday.

The day he died, he had just bought him a car. And him and some other ninjas went on one. He asked me and Stone if we wanted to go on one with them.

I said no because we had some work that night. So after we got done with some females, some ninjas rode past us and said — our ninja ANT just got shot!

We found out later that night — he had died! And that's an experience that changed my life.

-Lil' Bra

From The Beat: When you say it changed your life, you mean you can never feel the same with ANT gone. But unless you really do change your life, you're riding toward the same fate. You know he would want something better for you. RIP ANT.

True Love

looking into your eyes has made me think of the true me i think about you and me and what we could be love to me is a form of caring because when i'm in trouble you'll be there just to show you how i feel from now on i plan to keep it real my love is sweet my love is strong my love will always carry on

-Lil' Sheedy

From The Beat: Sweet poem. We like your definition of love. If this is about a real love how can you two help each other do the right thing? Isn't that what true love is about too? Best luck in your love!

"Experiences"

My Cousin

Yeah, I do remember an experience that caused me to change my way of acting.

When my cousin passed away a couple of years ago, he made me slow down so I didn't get into any trouble ever since then. I don't really get into trouble unless I got to do what I got to do.

-D

From The Beat: Hey, nobody's pointing a gun to your head forcing you to get down with the get down. That's all on you if you "gotta do what you gotta do." Wake up and smell the fresh air. Your future is on the line! What you do or don't do today will affect your tomorrow. And those who choose to play — will pay.

My Life My Homies

I was brought up in the streets when I was a little kid. Ever since then, I been affiliated in a gang.

I can't wait till I get out this place so could kick it with my homeboys.

Hopefully this will be the last time I'll be in this place. I was also raised up seeing people doing drugs and drinking on the streets.

-Lil' Monster

From The Beat: Do you think that because you were raised that way, you'll stay that way? Have you ever thought about the future this kind of life has in store for you? Have you ever thought about changing?

interview with SH

(BW= The Beat Within)

BW: What experience in your life turned your heart cold?

SH: Coming to jail.

BW: Did it make you softer or harder?

SH: Made me soft — I can't do my regular thing.

BW: What do you miss the most, honestly?

SH: My granny, my momma, my sister, my cousins, my aunties, my patnas, and my little bra bra, Weetie.

BW: People are important to you, huh?

SH: Family is important, school's important, life's important.

BW: In the hall are you finding new patnas as solid as your patnas on the outs?

SH: Nope

-Sh

From The Beat: We are glad you have a family. So many don't. We hope you will learn how to stop destroying your future and freedom and influencing your patnas to do the same. Do you think if you and your patnas were really looking out, then you or them would encourage each other to stop getting high all the time and doing dirt? We hope you can be a leader when you get out.

probation

I changed my life when I got on probation. I remember the time that I got on probation. That time will be stuck with me till the end.

I robbed the hospital to get a laptop and I got on probation. I hate that I did it, but I got to live.

-Lil' J

From The Beat: Do you think that you can live without a laptop? Most people do. Can't you find other ways to get by?

Warning

I have experienced a new thing by coming to Juvenile Hall. I think if you come to Juvenile Hall, it is a warning from God to learn your mistake.

-Byron

From The Beat: What are some lessons that you've learned by coming to Juvenile Hall?

Free! But Now I'm Not

I was a free man. Now I'm not. I'm locked up in juvenile hall for some shhh that I didn't do.

Now I'm serving a few weeks for the first time. I've never been in jail. I've never been in trouble.

When I get out, I'm not coming back. I'm a changed man. I'm a start a new life, find a wife, make some kids. I'm not coming back.

-Mike

From The Beat: Put some years between "start a new life, find a wife, make some kids." And make sure your new life includes getting out of the street game, 'cause now you see.

That Caused Me To Change ...

when i was kicked out of my house and living on the streets i was basically forced to change my ways of thinking i had to survive on my own by any means necessary

-Robert

From The Beat: In order to survive, it is necessary to keep changing. Look where you are now. Time to find better ways and means — and graduate from these dead-end streets!

Don't Come To Juvenile Hall

Don't come to Juvenile Hall because the food is nasty.

You have to be behind walls most of the time.

You have to shower in front of six naked boys.

You want "top citizen" if you are not,

'Cause they get sodas, donuts, and extra stuff.

You have a lot of programs each night.

-Sanders

From The Beat: Since you don't like Juvenile Hall, what are you doing so that you don't come back to the Hall ever again?

Why I Started Gang Banging

I remember what got me started banging. I was a youngster walking the streets and some rival gang jumped me and kicked my ass, and they almost stabbed me. Ever since then I was destined to hate that certain rival gang. That was just the beginning.

I got gamed by some OG's, now I'm banging for this gang! What is it! I didn't think of my life to be like this, but God does things for a reason, but I ain't mad, it's for life. Only God can judge me.

-Lil' José

From The Beat: Thanks for sharing your reasons about how you got jumped in. Do you think this is your choice or God's? Could the only reason you are in a gang be that it's a test if you have enough guts and love to get out of it? How can someone feel secure in life without being in a gang to protect them? Your life on earth is up to you — you will make your life a living incarcerated hell continuing being hardcore. If you knowingly sin, how can you see your heaven? These are questions to you. We urge you to answer them. We wish you peace, but it's up to you.

r-i-p chris

Rest in peace to Chris. It was a sad time when I heard you passed. See you in the Thug Mansion. R-I-P Chris aka Lil' Mod.

-Young Friend

From The Beat: Chris doesn't want to see your life end — change your ways Young Friend.

Changes

the experience that causes me to change is my life that is a very important experience for me life has many ways and experiences that come hard and easy

-Nathan

From The Beat: In a sea of changes, it is hard to choose a direction to follow but easy to drift, even into trouble.



"Experiences"

Judging Others

Something that changed me was judging people and not being aware of the wrong in it. Later on in life I got punished for it along with a lot of other stuff. So it is a fact that bad things will come back to you. So it's not worth it 'cause you can never be sick, 'cause what goes on in the dark will always come to the light.

-Markea GU

From The Beat: Good lesson to remember and share.

Experience That Cause You To Change

One experience that totally changed my life is the death of my mother. It made my heart turn cold. Ever since that happened, I stopped giving a shhh about everything. Screw everybody and everything.

Lately I've been trying to loosen up on that, but some of the decisions that I've made lately, I've had that "I don't give a shhh" attitude. After my friend Scharod died, I really started to get that "I don't give a shhh" attitude.

-Shannon GU

From The Beat: We're sorry to hear about the death of your loved ones. Death can really mess with people's heads — sometimes making them feel hopeless and sometimes making them decide they have to really live right since death is always waiting at the door. We hope you can turn your "I don't give a shhh" attitude around and start to live your life in a way that would make your mom and you happy and proud.

Life was never meant to be lived the way we young people is livin' it

What Caused Me To Change

I think that one day I will eventually change because I will get tired of doing what I do because something might happen when I decide to change.

When I was younger I seen things happen to some of my family members that made my heart turn cold, and my attitude changed towards everything. But things happen every day.

When I saw my cousin get shot in front of me and my uncle, I was like, "Damn! Who can I really trust?" 'Til this day, I be like, what if that was me?

So now I think about changing on a day-to-day basis. It's never too late for change. Better safe than sorry.

-Billy Ray B5

From The Beat: We worry a little about that "never too late" attitude, because it seems to us like you are using that expression to postpone the change you know you must make. As long as you think change is something you can keep putting off into the future, then it may become too late to change. We think it's time to stop thinking about it and start doing it.

Life

Many wars I done been through, trapped in the game wit' no dad.

Sometimes I wonder if God really hears our prayers because, me personally I pray ever night and I still see the rain. I've never had a sunny day. I've seen many wars and many people killed.

Life was never meant to be lived the way we young people is livin' it. My mother always tell me a disobedient child only live half their days, and that becoming reality because children, well teens, are dying because they don't believe.

They say they've been through so much like momma on dope with no father and imagination is their only mind elevation. But their creation is mostly death.

I know now what life is about. Why not go through hell for a lifetime when we can have heaven for eternity?

-Teflon Don B4

From The Beat: We're not quite sure we understand what you're trying to say here. Are you saying that life is hell because you got to spend eternity in heaven? Or, are you saying that life should not be hell at all, but the way some people live their lives makes it hell? How do you believe life is meant to be lived? Why do you think reality is so far off from that vision?

for grams

One experience I got is when I was going through it when my Grandma died. I had to go all out, start whooping ninjas, carrying that thing-thing every day.

I got caught up in a robbery, I calmed down when I was locked down, and said this is what my Grandma want me to do, 'cause I know she'd be spinning in her grave.

So they sent me to The Ranch. Now I'm trying to get my life back together. It ain't all about material, it's about your life.

-Lorenzo LCRS

From The Beat: It's good that you are calming down. How are you going to make sure you stay calm once you get out? What would your Grams want you to do with yourself in the future? You're lucky to have the things your Grams taught you guiding you, because getting your life together now is going to be much easier than waiting until you're a fully grown man. Stay strong.

Monster Changed Me

What caused me to change was when I read the book of Tookie Williams, the life story. I read about San Quentin and that shhh is for nobody, because people can get killed any time, any day.

When you're taking a sit-down in the yard, people can come from behind you and kill you in a second. And you be in your room for twenty-three hours a day. You can go in there with your friend that you knew for years, and he switch on you in a second. Y'all supposed to be friends, but that's how it is in the pen.

And people be talking about they want to go to the pen! They don't know what the hell they talking about. You can have family in there and they will turn they back on you. That's how it is in there. That's no place for nobody.

That caused me to change a little bit, but I'm still going to post on the block, because that's where I'm from and that's where I'll always be from.

-Young Rob B1

From The Beat: You say you have changed and you aren't trying to go to The Pen, but if you're staying out there on the block it is very possible that you could end up there. If you are going to go to the block just to kick it with your folks, do you think y'all could kick it somewhere neutral where you guys won't get in trouble? Can you tell us exactly how you've changed? What will you do differently because of reading Tookie's book?

What i used to do

I used to be in this click, and what we used to do is go around and hit licks, steal cars, etc. What made me decide that I didn't want to be in the click no more is I just got tired. I started thinking, "What was the whole purpose?" So I just started praying and moving on with my life, and gave it up.

-Retired GU

From The Beat: We're glad to hear you listened to your heart and mind and moved on to other things. Any idea why you realized this truth while other folks are still caught up in the game?

to doing

Changing is something I look forward to doing, because of different situations that occurred in my life, like fights over respect, and dignity, and fighting with weapons.

I be caught in the vibe, the stress of no turning back. Ride or die? You got to pay the price, ninjas rollin' dice. Never thought twice for being low on the time. Me doing wrong, that's what I'm used to doing without no problem. Riding or dying.

I want to do educational programs. My life was hectic and unresistable, and I was sick on my feet. I felt like nobody can beat me because I'm me. I'm somebody that learned from the streets and did everything. And what I needed the most was somebody to take the time and be there for me and support young T. I will succeed.

-Tiffany GU

From The Beat: We see you changing, Tiff. Your attitude is so much more positive now then it was when you first came into the unit. We really hope you can find the support you need to change within yourself and from others who can be there for you. We hope that really wanting to live a different type of life will attract good people to you who want to help. Try not to let your mom or anyone else out there drag you down, Tiffany. You can be more. And if we can help you out more, please let us know.

Watching them do Nothing

An experience that caused me to change was seeing my homies not doing something constructive with themselves. I see 'em always in and out of lock up. Seeing this makes me think differently about the choices to make so I could do something to better myself.

I'm 'bout to change little by little.

-Weasel LCRS

From The Beat: Changing little by little may be the only way any of us can do it, but we don't think you're 'bout to change, we think you've already begun that process. We've seen the changes in you, Weasel, so we know that you don't think the same way now as when we first met you. What are you hoping to take with you when you leave from The Ranch? Do you think you could try to help some of your homies do something when you get out?

That Last Chance

What caused me to change was the very last chance I got this time instead of going to YA.

I thank God every day for the miracles He has done in my life.

I now understand that the system is not even playing no more wit' us; I just got the biggest chance of my life. The judge told me that he was ready to give me one more chance to change the way I am, so that's why I just got blessed.

So those are my experiences of a miracle happening in my life. So to everybody, believe in miracles, never lose hope. One love to all my girls in San Mateo County and to all the SF/YGC girls.

-Estrella GU

From The Beat: We're so glad you've been given this chance, Estrella. We know you will put it to good use.



Cuffs

When they slapped the cuffs on me I was waiting for it because I had to turn myself in and wait for them to show up to arrest me, which for me is one of the hardest things I have ever done, because I would have rather run than go to jail and sit for two weeks or a month. Where the only thing to do is sleep, eat, and read books.

But in ten days I am going to Grizzly Youth Camp that is five-and-a-half months long and when I get out, I won't be seeing anymore cuffs.

-David

From The Beat: That took a lot of strength to turn yourself in. We're happy freedom is just around the corner for you. What's yo' plan when you complete Grizzly?

Please Bring Him Back!

If I could bring one person back, I would bring back my daddy because he's the only person I have ever felt real unconditional love from. I would ask him why. Why'd you leave me? Why'd you make me cry? Why'd did you promise to be there when you're not? Just, why?

I want to say I'm sorry. I know I've disappointed you, and I know it's hard to look down on your only child while she's packing a fat bowl of dope, melting it, then pressing it to her lips watching fat clouds come out of her mouth. Or watching her sip back on a forty and loving it. I wish I could take it back, but I can't. I know you'd never leave me. But at times it just feels that maybe you should.

-Desiree

From The Beat: How would your actions be different if your daddy were still alive? Since you believe your daddy's still with you in spirit, can you use his support to help change your ways? Do the drugs still make you feel good, or are they just a habit/addiction now? What else do you like in the world?

first girlfriend

My first love, her name was Laura. I was twelve when I met her. She was my first girlfriend I ever had. We were together for two years, but then her parents didn't want us together so she got sent to Arizona.

The day she left I felt like it was the worst day of my life, because I missed seeing her beautiful face close to mine. Laura was the first girl that I ever kissed. It took me at least six months to forget that she was never coming back.

The worst part of all was that I never got her address in Arizona or her phone number so there was no way I could ever see her again. Since then I never felt the same way for another girl.

-Evencio

From The Beat: This is such a sad, but sweet, story. It's like Romeo and Juliet. We hope you can reunite with Laura again some day, or find somebody else who is as amazing as she is.

When they slapped the cuffs on me I was waiting for it because I had to turn myself in

What's become of me?

I look back at the past
With no reason to laugh
And ask why the path
Of my life moved so fast
A tragedy ably making it impossible for
Me to relax
My tracks disappeared
My fears at their max
Pushing me to the edge
Instead of fighting I collapse
Perhaps insanity has passed
And I'm trapped by the fact
The only thing I can do is can't
I blasted my chance
My only chance to advance
And surpass the harassment
That attacks the lack
Of memories I have

-Michael

From The Beat: It sounds like you haven't given up yet — you're still fighting, and we commend you on your will to survive. Still, you face many challenges and we want to see you overcome them. So how are you going to step up to your fears, angers, regrets and win?

Black And Brown

What's the fuss
the world belongs to us
so never sweat the beef
small things come to some giants
and we're rising
higher then the trees
controlling the breeze
now we're flying
who can deny it?
if these worlds collide
and finally unite
we'll set this place on fire
now it's more than a desire
I require the empire
Black and brown runnin' the town
riding side by side as riders
time to unite and acquire
the strength it takes to move higher

-Michael

From The Beat: Are you saying that black and brown aren't united? Why? Is it the cliques? The game? The prejudices — I won't ride wit' you 'cause you're Mexican, Salvadoran, Haitian, African, French, German? And do you want to unite for positive or negative reasons? Why stop at black and brown? Why not unite all people? What's stopping us?

How I Felt When I Got Cuffed

When they slapped the cuffs on me, this time I knew it was gonna be a long ride after that. So I just kept my head up and dealt with it. They put cold steel on my wrists and I thought more about what my mom was gonna say, and how she was gonna feel.

I don't ever give a shhhh what my PO was gonna say or the judge, 'cause they don't matter to me. So now after I have been in here for almost four months, I'm going to Grizzly Youth Academy on January 18th and will be off of probation when I get out. So now I'm not really happy with what is going on in my life right now, but I keep my head up and deal with it.

-Blake

From The Beat: Did you guess right — about what your mom was going to say? How come you don't care about your PO and judge? What would have cleared the bad blood between you? What makes a good, fair judge and PO?

Napa

A Moment

Let's stay within our fortress
And lay in bed for days
The world will go on without the instructor
And the sound is just a puppet
In our walls we can be quiet
We stare at the blank screens and laugh
It's contagious, it's the future
We can do it just like that
And in the thick of night, can wonder
Everything that's in our reach is ours
To sleep with or scream at, it's ours
And we can be silent forever
Filling space with our songs
Giving taste to broken mirrors
Hunting life and trapping it in closets
Only feeding when we are ready
And it's a tease, freedom
So kill time inside and wait it out it will
simply go some day, and gladly but for now
let's build a tower.

-Chicken Smith

From The Beat: This is an interesting poem! You have natural writing skills! You also have a unique way of perceiving things. You should write more pieces like this.

Our Vision

It's a naked idea closed to me
A collection of glamour trapped in the bowels
Of a shadowy monster.
Starring in on it's self a open care of heat
And lust of exposure for interest
But it's hidden from the eyes above.
We launch our vision through telescopes
And grasp light and pull it close
And view worlds so different than our own
where people dance with their monsters tucked up
underneath their skin.
Where children play with weapons and poke
their baby monsters into corners, smiling.
The sun, always out, but darkness clouds the hollow
faces of those yellow people and with our strength
we smell and taste the stench of their own deaths,
their monsters and we know pity for once, but we
will learn to cry also when
We turn our eye and see those worlds our
reflections in the sky.

-Chicken Smith

From The Beat: Poetry always means different things to each reader. Oftentimes, the best poetry is very hard to understand. It would be nice if you took a few minutes after you wrote a poem to write a few sentences explaining the meaning of your poetry.

Virginia

Three Strikes And Your Out

The "Three Strikes Law" does not affect me, however I think it should be. One felony should be enough to teach someone, moreover, three! I think it is a fair law. It is just like baseball, three strikes and your out.

-Jr

From The Beat: Good points. Unfortunately, they count lesser offenses as a strike and young teens are facing twenty years to life because they violated their probation. If the system isn't helping people stop their criminal lifestyle, is this law still fair?

**One felony
should be
enough to teach
someone**



Meditation

When you breathe in, think of fun
When you breath out, say number 1.
If your thoughts stray, start over again
You're supposed to count, one to ten.
Inhale and exhale, is what you do
This exercise is bound to relax you.
Meditation, lifts the weight off your shoulders,
When you meditate.

-Rob Sweet 16

From The Beat: Right on for the lesson in taking care of yourself through meditation.

Having Hope

Having hope that this would end,
Having hope that I was not here again.
Having hope the sun will rise,
Having hope that I'll survive.
Having hope that my day will come,
Having hope the mind will overcome.
All the pain that grows deep inside me,
Having hope because I'm me.
Having hope because I'm the shhh,
Having hope because I know,
I'll achieve the highest in my goals,
Having hope is the way to go.
Dedicated to every youth

-Vaniam

From The Beat: Hope IS the way to go. Hope, faith and belief are what we all need to achieve, to survive and to succeed. Teach on!

Luv

Luv is the most powerful thing
Luv is so beautiful
Luv is the changing point in life
Am I ready for this
Yes 'cause this man
Is the one I must trust
Luv ya' Leggs.

-Vaniam

From The Beat: Vaniam, love is a powerful thing. This is a nice piece you should share it with the one you love.

If

If enemies lay me down to sleep,
I pray the Lord my soul to keep
And if I die in this life of hate
I pray the Lord my soul he'll take
And in this life I lead
Gangbanging and running from police
I pray the Lord watch over my friend
'Cause I love him like my brother
and don't want him paying his sins
So I want to say what's up to you all
'Cause this may be the last time I see y'all
Peace. Dedicated to Joker

-Lil' Flaco

From The Beat: Do you want to make it so that you don't have so many enemies? Does having God in your life make your life more meaningful? Does gangbanging and following the Lord's teachings ever conflict with one another?

The Last Two Months

I was in a group home doing hell a good and tried to get my life situated until I got a phone call from my bro and he told me my close ass homeboy passed away. I flipped and started flashing on everyone. I said "Forget this program and I'm out." I packed up my clothes, shoes, and etc. I was out with my homegirl.

Then we both came back to the Bay Area and stayed with my moms. Then we left there split up and I took off to my homeboy's house while she was striking it to Berkeley.

While I was at my homeboy's I got a job at Burger King. I was the manager, it was easy for me to get that job because my sister owns it. A couple weeks after I quit and started getting back into drug dealing.

I was making more than a \$1000 a day. It was easy money that spent easy everyday money comes and money goes especially when you need to feed a couple of mouths, buy hell a clothes, shoes, and mo'.

The homies were loving it. They were even staying in my house. I got my own house I pay \$1500 a month for. It has three bedrooms, two bath, but anyway the homies live there with me 'cause I take care of my loved ones! Now they just gotta take care of me and get me out of here.

-Jessica

From The Beat: Fast money sure is nice, yet it can get you into a whole lotta trouble. Also, it's nice that you share with your loved ones. But, where are you now? Where did this lifestyle take you? Is there another way that you can make money to support yourself and feed a few mouths? You can't help anyone from inside the Hall.

To You

In here I feel the pain without you,
I really don't know what to do.
I want to feel you holding me,
I know we both are lonely.
We're not really so far apart,
I can feel you deep in my heart.
We are both in juvenile hall.
Sometime I feel I could just break down and fall.
I love you and I miss you
But all I have to say is
Don't mess up and it be kool.

-Chick

From The Beat: Nice poem. You should share it with that special person!

I Love You

I love you,
I miss you,
I need you in my arms,
I need you to hold me every night
When we go to sleep together.
I miss the way you kiss me,
Baby Boo all I want you to do,
Is love me forever and be with me.
Die with me,
Hold me in your arms every night,
Have a baby with you,
Have a happy family with you,
Baby Boo I love you,
You'll always be there for me,
Baby boo I would never replace you with another person.
Baby boo I love you,
I miss the way you smile at me,
I miss the way you take me everywhere,
Baby boo I cry every night,
Baby boo I think about you every night while I'm in jail,
Baby I stress while I'm in jail,
I just want to love you forever.

-Lisa

From The Beat: Lisa, this poem is really nice. You should share it with your Baby Boo, yet we encourage you not to rush into a situation you will regret down the road. You're so young!

Why do people talk

People talk because they think words fear people. I always say to girls, run up or shut up. 'Cause I ain't got time. All is runnin' is they gums 'cause they runnin' shh around me. I always say girls talk real loud but don't run up.

My sister always said don't let words get to you 'cause them broads ain't worth your time. Nowadays girls think they hard just they up in jail but knowing damn well they ain't never acted like that on the outs. But its cool 'cause females always tryin' to act a fool.

Females you ain't gotta lie to kick it. Get in where you fit in. I always say this, broads ain't ready for the pressure. Well, all I gotta say is I'm tired of seeing the same old faces watching them clean out the' dirty draws.

-Lil' Mama Hanna

From The Beat: Your sister gave you some good advice. You shouldn't let words get to you. You're stronger than that. It does get really old seeing the same people doing the same thing everyday. But, since you are in this situation, what can you do? How can you cope with this? Don't you think your sister's advice will help keep you sane? If those broads ain't worth your time, then what is worth your time? How will you spend your time?

Stuff On My Mind

Stuff on my mind — court, my baby girl, and how much time I'm about to get. I hope I get a fair judge that can see that I'm not a bad person and give me one more chance. So that I can prove to them that I have a good heart and show them that I do have something going for my future, and not just running up and down the streets acting a fool.

So all I do day and night is pray that I don't get sent to CYA because I think deep down in my heart that I deserve just one more chance.

-Matt

From The Beat: We hope you get that chance but sometimes all the dirt catches up and face the laws of cause and effect. You can still give yourself a chance to persevere under the most difficult circumstances. CYA would be a difficult one but we have witnessed focus and success from people who got released from CYA. Plus some get their GED and job skills training there. Good luck!

A Lot

What's up Beat! I'm back in for the fifth time.

Man, a lot of shhh been happening. My homeboy died not too long ago. He was one of my co-partners.

I go back to court tomorrow, I hope I get out soon.

I try to be cool but Berkley police be messing with me and the homies.

The police is the reason why my homeboy Snoopy died. I just want the homies to stay up. I'm out. RIP Snoopy

-Lil' Creepy

From The Beat: That does sound like a lot of things to be going through. How are you dealing with all the pressure? If you could do something to stop the violence with the police, what would you do?

Meditation

When you breathe in, think of fun
When you breath out, say number 1.
If your thoughts stray, start over again
You're supposed to count, one to ten.
Inhale and exhale, is what you do
This exercise is bound to relax you.
Meditation, lifts the weight off your shoulders,
When you meditate.

-Rob Sweet Sixteen

From The Beat: Right on for the meditation lesson. We are sure many will attempt your directive. Like taking dance lessons. Practice makes almost perfect.

i'm tired

I'm tired, not sleepy or exhausted,
But keeping heat up on me often
'Cause if you don't you could be deep in a coffin
You never know when you sleep you could be talking
I'm tired of running from the cops
They coming with they glocks
To shoot a young in his top
Man the guns'll never stop,
Like the tongue on the clock
I'm tired, of being accused for my race or color
There's no love; kids hate their mothers
Tell me why people rape each other?

-Laron

From The Beat: You ask some very good questions and we all ponder the same things sometimes. Sometimes we can't do anything about it and other times it starts with ourselves. What can you do to make sure that you're not contributing to the things you speak so passionately against?



CYA or placement

Hey what's up! Well it's been a while! I've been on the run a coo' minute! Now I'm back. I might go to the "Y" for about two years!

I'm tryin' to go to Camp. I go to court this coming Monday to find out where I go.

-Lil' Rickie

From The Beat: If you are given the chance to go to Camp, will that make you change? Or will you make so that you'll eventually end up in CYA? What's it gonna take for you to stop representing your 'hood? What are you willing to give or give up for your own good?

Unfairness

I just want to write about how unfair the system is.

I know a person who committed a Grand Theft Auto and is serving thirty days in Santa Rita. I was locked up for a stupid curfew violation, and I have to serve the same amount of time.

Since when is coming home late just as bad as stealing a car?

-Nick

From The Beat: You make a strong point. However, now that you know how it works, it's on you to deal with it for better or worse.

stop hating

My name is Lil' D, and I'm sitting in this unit doing my thing. But every time I turn around somebody is always hating on me!

Now I don't know if it because I got hands and I been taking people's girlfriends and wifeys. But I'm not tripping because this scand'lous type of thing that's inside of me will keep me standing tall. A boy like me is always going to keep one step before a fake, hating person like you.

So to all the haters: Stop hating. But I'm not tripping.

-Lil' D, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Yeah, we cut part of this piece, because all you are doing is inviting hate! Bragging on taking the next man's girlfriend! Bragging on being scandalous! And then you drag your "team" into it. Just be you when you hit the street, unless you like being part of the 150 Crew in The Beat.

Finally Met You

when the winter comes
it's the end of the fall
when i can't sleep at night
you are the first one i call
you're the love of my life
and i don't know why
when i look at the sky
all i can see is your eyes
i don't know what i would do
if i never got on that bus
and finally met you

-Rich

From The Beat: Your poem is headed in the right direction, but tell us more about that meeting on the bus — get more specific about the object of your affection.

Me

I'm feelin' like I'm being trapped back
Having flash backs on getting blast at

Wake me outta my sleep
Stackin' cheddar

Even though it probably won't get betta
Twistin' Phillies with the twelfth and the seventh letta

Purple smoke fill the scene

Ridin' profilin' with my mug on mean

Just blowin' living in Oakland

Where the streets are the only thing goin'

I ain't had a thousand dollar bundle in my draws so my pants sag

Never gettin' caught slippin'

I've been thinking about pimpin'

This skinny ninja never listen

Now I am locked up reminiscin'

But it is better than to be missin'

Closed casket blood drippin'

Mo' liquor bein' poured than these ninjas out here sippin'

I ain't got time to set back and pay attention

So when I get out

Set up shop out a drug house

They say I'm thugged out.

-Patrick

From The Beat: Good use of word play, but where will all this activity get you? Where has it gotten you so far? Do you like the destination? Where do you think you're heading? Do you think that you could ever change your ways? Why or why not?

Love them forever

Growing up in the hood wasn't even all-good when I was young;
mom and pops never gave me anything in my life.

When I was five all I ever had were dreams

of having a diamond chain and rings,

things that bling.

-Lil' Bobby

From The Beat: So what are you going to do to make your dreams come true? You realize now that doing things illegal will keep you down, so step up in the classroom/school house, then get yourself an after school part time job, and succeed on probation. These are the first steps!

Female Of My Dreams

Damn, you're fine only if you were mine
It's only a matter of time!

One day you will be mine

'Cause sooner or later your heart will break!

Am I dreaming should I awake?

Why do I feel this way?

I think about you all day

When there's a will there's a way

Stop dreaming it's just another day!

Maybe it's not

If it is — you'll never be forgot!

For Melissa

-Lil' Rickie

From The Beat: The female of your dreams ain't gonna wait for you forever. What are you willing to sacrifice in order to be together? You can't have a relationship while you're locked inside. So get out there, make her your lady and your future bride!

**Now I am
locked up
reminiscin'
But it is
better than
to be missin'**

My Weekend

What's up? This Lil' Skeet up at Camp 'bout to tell you 'bout my weekend. I went home Friday, and instantly started poppin' them bottles. All Saturday, I was with the homies. On Sunday, I missed my curfew call.

I seen my ex-baby'mama. She was lookin' hella good. Instantly I got her number. I'm gonna kick it wit' her next weekend and make more babies. Nah! I'm gonna kick it wit' her though.

On Monday night, it was hella hot! I seen like forty police cars in like ten minutes. Let's not speak on that though.

-Lil' Skeet

From The Beat: You better be joking about babies! On the real, you have got to slow your roll. It's not enough to survive your program; to leave the system forever — you need to change.

**the day i got
arrested
i felt
disrespected**

You Will Be Missed Reg And Gee

People say things ain't right and I really think they are right because it ain't right when Reg got shot — that ain't right. He was cool and kick back, really didn't do nothing just got high as the sky. He always kept it real. He kept it lit.

He sold dope to get the money to stunt. Now he's gone, I feel like some of the 'hood is gone. We named the 'hood after you.

Gee was cool. He was all about his money, new cars everyday. He always had something new to say to me when I was out all night.

-Lil' Beamer

From The Beat: Have you learned anything from the deaths of your street patnas? Do you really think they died for no reason? When you pass, what do you want to be remembered as? Do you want to be remembered by the same things you remember your friends by?

If I See You Again ...

Judge Kate told me

if he see me again

he sending me to the Y

for eighteen long ones.

That's why I need

to beat this dope case

before I can go home.

-T, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Beat your case, or not — what you've really got to do is decide you're through with that old life; and start living right, if you don't want to see the Y.

Situation

the day i got arrested

i felt disrespected

but then again

it taught my silly ass a lesson

can't believe i'm in this motha stressin'

it feel like i'm 'bout to explode

off heartburn an' indigestion

an' when i get up out this motha

i'm gonna start up

a purple session

an' i know it's other people

in my same situation

runnin' up and down the street

catchin' hella cases

it's never gon' to stop

so face it —

but not for me

-Demo

From The Beat: We hope what you mean by that snap-tight last line is that you know the game will go on using and abusing youth on the street, feeding them to the system chained hands and feet, if they're not already six-feet deep — 'cause the game won't stop. But you will, before it's too late. Now, why wait?



We Keep It Cracking

Yeah my home pass was crackin'. The homeboys birthday was Friday, but we celebrated it on Saturday.

The homie Sylent came through and swooped up me and Blinky from my pad and we shot out. The homeboys was doing a lil' show for their CD that 'bout to come out called "Home Sweet Home". So all the homeboys reading this — go and pick it up in a barrio near you!

Gang task force ended up crashing the party, but we was doing it! Hella bottles and drank, homeboys and females, low-lows and chronic, rappers and pits.

-Yung Lazy

From The Beat: What can we say? You're walking a tightrope with no net. Yet you refuse to use The Beat to think things through. Just look at the homies around you, all headed back to lockdown. You, too?

end of my program

Today is the thirteenth of April. I'm coming towards the end of my program. Next month on the twenty-seventh, I'm gone! So for those coming to Camp — do the program! And get out.

-Lil' June

From The Beat: You tell a simple and clear truth. We hope others will learn from you.

Broke Up

I just broke up with my girl, Gen. I miss her so much more! I think when I get out of Camp, I'm going to call her and get with her again — and maybe be happy again in life!

I don't really have anything special to say, but just this one thing: I miss you, Gen! Day and night, the only thing I think of is you, my ex-girlfriend. I will miss you for a really long! But I hope you're happy now. Much love to you, Gen. Bye. Love always,

-Lil' Thai

From The Beat: It's hard to break up when you're still in the system. Yet if you do hope to get together with her again, it's just one more reason to do a good program and better your life. Don't get stuck in the system's revolving door.

Wise Up

i think i should start thinking about my life and what i'm doing to myself —
i just went to court and i might go to a place known as c y a —
i never think of what i do until it is too late
i really need to wise up for myself —
and for my family

-Lil' Leo

From The Beat: We were so sorry to hear you ran from Camp that first week. And even though we'd hear about you on the street, we knew it might well come to this. Hope you get another shot at Camp, but even more so — hope you wise up!

Life now'days

My life now'days is hard, because I'm in Camp. I am trying my best to finish my program at Camp Sweeney so that I can have a good life again. I don't like this life of my going to jail and Camp — YA or the adult men's prisons!

-Lil' Thai

From The Beat: It's an inside job! Meaning: your good life starts with your good thinking — as you think, so you do!

Favorite: Ms. Johnson

ms johnson is hyfey and cool
but when you get on her nerves
she can act a fool
so don't piss her off
she could make a hard ninja soft
and she stay stunnin'
she's my favorite staff
it's nothin'
what is it
it's what you hear
when she come through
shakin' her head
doing what she do
wit' a big smile goin' dumb
telling us to go to school
and get our education
teaching us
she's our inspiration
yeah yeah
she's my favorite staff
and she' hella cool
this ms johnson
y'all ninjas stay in school

-Tishay

From The Beat: Some staff reach so far, they take ahold of your heart — and give it wisdom to help you start fresh and take your best shot in the only life you've got to live. And that's what Ms. Johnson gives to those who can take it in, like you Tishay! And so we say, thanks for these words of

Last Weekend

Last weekend I was with one of my sister's homeboys. So I was at my house, just chillin' with the homie, drinking a couple of forties of King Cobras.

And a little bit later, we started to talk about some girls. So I told him that there was a girl that lived down the hill from me and that she looked cool. So after I told him that he went down there.

But he didn't know that she had a man, and I didn't know either. So when he was there, her man wasn't home — so she let him in. And later on, her man came home; and him and the other guy started yelling at each other!

And then I looked over, and my homeboy stabbed the guy! And now he is in jail.

-Marc

From The Beat: This is a horror story, on the real. So many homies say they carry knives and guns for protection, but all it got your homie was a home in a house of correction. Thanks for the news story.

I Wish

I wish everybody was judged by their personality and by who they are on the inside, rather than by the color of their skin or by the way they look.

I wish everybody could realize that money, cars and gold, are only materialistic things, and they don't last long. While peace, love, and joy, are what a person really needs. I wish everybody could just get along.

-Edwin

From The Beat: We wish everybody could see things the way you do. But if you live as you wish, it will change the world around you; for you will attract and inspire like-minded people.

I hope you're happy now. Much love to you

Silent Cries

dark cold night
looking at the city lights
deep in my soul
i feel alone
wishing i could
call you
on the phone
if only i could
see your beautiful eyes
haven't seen you
so long
memories die
not being able
to see you
breaks my heart
wishing we were
never apart
what can i do
to make up for
all the lost days
if only it was
like the old days
meeting you was a gift
that heaven sent
now i'll be lucky
to see you on weekends
wishing i could
hold you in my arms
keep you away from
all harm
i love you
and always will
and for you
i would kill
and when i come
home
i'll make sure to put you
on a throne
no matter how
i am out of your life
it will always be
me and you
till i die
no matter how far
we are
i'll always
be by your side
but for now
i remain
with silent cries
-Shomoe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your tender poem will fly on angels wings to sing your love to sleep and fill her dreams with scenes of how it used to be. And though she wakes alone, she'll feel your love is strong.

fact: Liking to Loving to Hate

keeping it real
till labeled great
come on we've done too much
to stop
that's why i climb
till i reach the top
i stay on point
like a clock
so i can be watched
and they'll know
what time it is
'cause i do it for myself
try to live well
i do
but some don't really know
what i go through
or how i feel
they just know what i do
the game is to be sold
not to be told
but some ninjas get it took
by ninjas that's bold
so to make a long story short
do what could be done
and it comes from the heart

-Tishay

From The Beat: You use the language of the street to defeat the ones who would turn you from your climb to stability, happiness and success. But don't let that old talk seduce back to your old walk, 'cause it leads to shackles on your ankles and in your brain. So do your do, and don't give up on the change in you.

I don't like that I sometimes feel so angry

My Weekend

What's up, it's the homeboy Green Eyes, just postin'. My weekend went like this: First I went to my house and got creased up.

After that, I went to the hood and was postin' it — but TASK jacked me and told me to get off the spot. But I ain't listenin'! So I keep postin' 'cause the block is poppin'.

-Green Eyes

From The Beat: And now as we respond to this, we hear you're in the Hall in max. When you read this piece maybe you'll see it's almost like you were asking for it. But even with us, you just "ain't listening"! Sorry. Time to go deep, open your eyes and see.

Games People Play

Games people play all days with me. I don't like when people try to play all kind of games with me. I don't like that I sometimes feel so angry it's as if I could hurt people just so that they don't play games with me anymore.

-Lil Yt

From The Beat: It's natural to get upset and angry when people won't leave you alone, but if you ever acted on those feelings — you'd be locked up with j-cats forever and ever. Walk away. Chill. Or write!



Weekly Writings

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think change

I won't do no stupid things that will get me locked up, because it is stupid and it don't get me no money. So once I get out, I'm gonna concentrate on how to make money legally.

-Unknown B1

From The Beat: What kind of things do you like to do? Do you think you could find a job doing something you like?

yeah

When I'm in here it's so sad that I just think. I miss my family. They're my life and so I think a lot. The more I think...

-Ricky B1

From The Beat: The more you think... we wish you could have finished your thought, but maybe it wasn't meant to be. What do you miss most about your family? Do you miss one family member in particular?

Can't We All Just Get Along

I be going to school. My big homies tell me to go to school. They be telling me to go in the house when it is late, because brothas be beefing, shooting each other. So I go in and come out the next day. I think the beef is going to stop when somebody kills or they call peace.

-Mount Vernon B1

From The Beat: What do you think it will take to get to the point where a side is willing to call for peace? When will people realize that people are getting killed for nothing? Do think anyone is strong enough to stop it?

Qs To Ask Yourself

How exciting are your dreams? Most people aim too high and miss. They aim too low and miss. Do you prefer to set dreams for yourself that are easy to achieve, or dreams that are only realized through time and hard work?

Thinking is the hardest work there is. Which is probably the reason few engage in it. A long life my not be good enough, but a good life is long enough.

Would you rather die at fifty having lived an extremely satisfying and successful life, or live to be one hundred having experienced little happiness and few real highlights in life?

-Lil' Nick B4

From The Beat: Where do you aim your dreams, Nick? We have watched you mature into the thoughtful young man you are today, and we wonder how you plan to engage that brain of yours for your future? Do you have some catching up to do on the basics of your education? Are you working toward a particularly career, or do you just want to gain as much education as you can and see where it takes you?

Would you rather die at fifty having lived an extremely satisfying and successful life, or live to be one hundred having experienced little happiness and few real highlights in life?

Holding It Down

This be that boy, Black. What's up Beat readers? You know me, holding it down 'cause you know I got to eat.

For now on you can call me Black 'cause I stunt wit' that black thang like it ain't no tomorrow. Yeah, yeah it's all gravy wit' me. Go ahead an' shine, cause all I want is a gee an' a trunk full of keys.

Take it from Black, I'ma put you on. Just bring me my cash back.

-Black B4

From The Beat: Exactly where are you holding it down, Black? Just keep focusing on the gees and keys, and you'll end up writing us pieces for The Beat Without from any number of places they have waiting for you up the line.

My Turning Point

My life is the most precious thing I have. I feel that wherever you go, there you are. Time is going to take its toll and you will be made. You have to plan your life the way you want it to be. You have to not be afraid to say, "No."

People are going to give you advice. It's based on your own decision weather or not you take that good or bad advice! I haven't been through much, but at that I still had a hard life.

Before you know it life's going to smack ya in the face. All and everything is of importance, but knowing nothing that is good happens fast.

-Lil' Nick B4

From The Beat: Well, winning the lottery happens fast — but we don't know anyone who has won the lottery. So, we have to agree with you that to get what you want out of life you have to first think about what it is you want, then make preparations to achieve it, then go after it in a positive way. We think you're on that path, and that you'll probably have to exercise that "No" option more than once along the way.

For My Haters

What's up Beat Within? This is Lil' Mississippi writing back seeing what up with you, letting you know how I feel.

Me, I have a lot of haters, why I don't know. I'm the same like everybody else. Maybe the reason you hate me is because you don't have no life of your own. But it's cool if you hate me because if I was you I would hate on me, too.

Get it right. Don't hate me, hate the game

-Lil' Mississippi B4

From The Beat: This raises more questions than answers, LM. Why would you hate on yourself if you were the person you're writing about? Why should we hate the game but not the game's players? Do you hate the game? If so, why play it? Do you think you have more haters than anyone else? Why?

Looking Back

Looking back on what we had
It's so sad

How we both thought we was a mack
Thinking we was playing one another,
And didn't realize we both was really
Meant for each other

The day you left and said it was over
I wanted you more, more than ever
But I didn't want you to know

So I kept it on the low
After a while I tried to let you go
But I couldn't seem to do so
My feelings for you was just too strong.

I needed you all along
But when I finally had the courage
To tell you

You was already gone.

(Dedicated to Young ee's)

-Debbie GU

From The Beat: Sad, Debbie. It's amazing how so many of us play with your feelings — lots of times just to try and protect ourselves from getting hurt. And then we get hurt anyway. Has this experience taught you anything about how you'll run your next relationship?

Love for Me

Who got love for me? My peeps, family, and my close relatives. I know that the streets make me cold-hearted, but it's for my own good, as if too many emotions do me bad. So when lil' mama tells me she loves me, I really don't mind, but I will like to show some affection.

-Cricks B2

From The Beat: Why do you think too many emotions are bad for you? How do you show your lil' mama love?

Pray For Me

The only reason I'm alive
Is 'cause my momma be prayin'
Thou shall not turn on his ninja
That's a big Amen
My evil twin switched sides on me
I thought we was cool

-Tay-Dumpa B4

From The Beat: We had to take a couple of lines out of this poem, TD, because they came across like a threat. Is your "evil twin" a separate being, or just part of who you are? What makes him evil?

You da type of person dat I'd want to be in my paradise.

Killings

This is really getting out of hand, people getting killed. My big homie just got killed on some other shhh. Some of y'all might know him.

Just to keep it real, it ain't never gone stop. Somebody from yo' set get killed, and someone else get killed, that's just what they want us to do. Put the guns in our communities, and the dope, and let us kill ourselves.

Last week somebody else just got killed. Don't think you can't get touched, or you the man of steel.

-Londesse B1

From The Beat: Why do you think so many young people are willing to face harm for their turf or color? How do you think things would be in the streets if there were no guns? You complain about "they put the guns in our communities and the dope," but who is the "they"? Do you think you or your community bear any responsibility for how those guns or drugs are used?

Dedicated To My Princess

This piece I'm gon dedicate to my boo. Yo, wassup wit' you? I just wanted to thank you for being there. Feel me. Besides my pops you tha only other person who came up here to see my black butt.

You also been on my side since day one, and you kept faith in me when it seemed like no one else would. Even when you came to the little family visit you waited like 2 1/2 hours till they brought me down from my unit, and you was looking all sexy and stuff. But besides that, I knew you was and are the one. You're more committed to me than I am right now, and it's not that I don't wanna be, it's just dat I ain't never really seen love like dis. Wit all dem otha females it was more like lust.

You da type of person dat I'd want to be in my paradise. Feel me? Have my kids, and share my last name and all dah stuff. I just wanted you to know dat, and dat you'll always be my princess. I love you. One. Stay down.

-Afro B4

From The Beat: This is a really nice expression of love for that special person, Afro. You know, in some countries, the man gives up his last name and takes his wife's family name. Would you ever do that? What makes her so special, and what does she say makes you so special in her eyes? Whatever the reasons, it's nice to know that you have someone you love in your corner.



Too Much

I just want to get out of here because people just do too much wit' it in here, because I'm not trying to get in any more trouble.

When I get out, I'm going straight to a group home. Man, I just want to get a job and support myself and stay out of trouble, but I'm going to do my best on the outs.

I gotta do six weeks, but it's cool, it's nothing. I'm a young teenager now, but I'm going to live as long as I can be cool out there, y'all.

-James B1

From The Beat: What would need to happen for you to stay cool? What kind of things would make you lose that cool? What else besides having a job will keep you out of trouble? What kind of job do you want?

thee die day

You ain't ready for thee die day
My brother Lil' D writin' from CYA
How 'bout you be me for a minute and I be you
You couldn't survive and end up in ICU
You locked up like me
But you think you better
You call 'em the homies
Ain't none of them writin' you letters
Stay down!

-Tay-Dumpa B4

From The Beat: What is "thee die day"? We're not sure if you're describing something that already exists or something that you are warning about in the future. Are you thinking that one day you will be where your brother Lil' D is now? Or, are you telling him to keep his head down when he sees you?

rest in peace

RIP-Money Mike
RIP-Larry
RIP-Jarvo
RIP-Awax
RIP-Jo
RIP-Moe
RIP-Boo Bang
RIP-D-Rock
RIP-Diddie RIP-Starv
RIP-Curt
RIP-Road
RIP-Ced
RIP-Winter

RIP-Face
RIP-K.G
RIP-Dic+head
RIP-Shorty
RIP-Big Homie
RIP-Dre
RIP-Dee-lou
RIP-NellaWood
RIP-Big Lurch

-J-Stub B2

From The Beat- "Be Safe"

Freedom

Hey ya, wassup, it's Young OO in here. You know what I want to write about? Freedom. You know what's the worst part about being in jail is not knowing when you're getting out.

I'm hella mad at my PO, only got me in here because he fear for my safety and now I'm going to a group home.

I guess now all there's to do is wait. This shhh ain't cool at all. For all the people — that's girls and boys that got freedom — stay out. And I would like to give a shout out to all the homies locked up, love y'all. Stay down and keep it cool in the units. I know I am. Peace.

-Baddest female GU

From The Beat: Freedom is a terrible thing to lose, but so is your life. Does your PO have a reason to fear for your safety? What can you do to build a safer life, one that will keep you alive and out of the Hall?

What I Gotta Do

When I be in here
I think about what I did
And why I did it
When I get out
I'm 'a go to school
Do what I gotta do
So I won't have to come back to the Hall
Because when I'm in here
I think about my mom and sister
But that's all I can do, is think
I can't call my mom when I want to
That makes me mad
'Cause I love my mom
And when I can't see her when I wanna
So I think I should just do
What I gotta do.

-Lil' Paris GU

From The Beat: We think you're right, Paris. Do what you have to do to stay out of the Hall, and don't do what will bring you back to the system. We know you're into some things that are dangerous and can bring you heaps of trouble — decide now to do all you can do to stay away from them, please.

rip homies

Man, I been in here for like 150 days and two of my big homies got killed. And when somebody has to tell you your homies got killed, it makes a ninja mad as hell.

RIP to Fred and Reem and Lee and Joe.

-J-Stub B2

From The Beat: We can only imagine how hard to must be to hear about someone you care about dying and not being able to do anything, not even go to the funeral. But, we hope you won't do anything about it that will land you back in the Hall or worse.

i gotta eat

I gotta eat
I'd rather flip cases
Than burgers
This year in the Bay
San Francisco got the most murders
I ain't saying it's good
Ninjas is dying in the 'hood
Some shouldn't and some should
I gotta eat
Schemers is plottin'
Heat keep on poppin'
Bodies keep droppin'
It ain't stoppin'
Nevertheless the cow bring the beef
Regardless of the fact
This youngsta gotta eat

-Tay-Dumpa B4

From The Beat: How much can you justify with the phrase, "This young gunna gotta eat"? Are you saying you can't eat without stealing? You can't eat without packing? What's the connection between having to eat and "ninjas dying in the 'hood"? Can you suggest any way out of this, any way for people to eat without having to hurt or rob other people?

Ring Around The Ghetto

Since I was nine, my dreams reached higher levels
But the ghetto had me trapped in its black holes
When my moms did bad, we cried in lonely rooms
My tears hit the ground and made holes like bullet wounds
Tryna survive in a house where my dad was gone
My destination kept me up so I could stay strong
Because occupation is killing young brothers on the street
Since we were born, our destination was "Rest In Peace"
Because it's a small world where beef will never end

-Tefflon Don B4

From The Beat: Do you mean that beef will never end in the small world you occupy, or do you mean the whole world is small and there will always be fighting? Is there a way to make your world bigger, to experience things outside that ring? Are you curious about how the rest of the world lives?

Stay Off Those Streets

Just stay off the street life and be yourself. Don't try to be like other people. Just be yourself. Take care of your family and stay your ass in da house.

The street ain't going to help you with you school or your family. The street is always going to be there. The gang shhh that yo' in, forget that.

-Jimo B4

From The Beat: How can you take care of your family by staying in the house? How can you avoid the drama of the streets and still take care of yourself and your loved ones?

Not guilty

What's up, Beat Within? This Lil' Mississippi back speaking what's on my mind.

They got me locked up in YGC. I take that back; I got me up in YGC hanging with the wrong crowd. I didn't do the crime, but I'm doing the time. But every criminal is innocent, at least that's what they say. But it's messed up when you really are, and you doing somebody else time, and there's nothing you can do about it.

I was just hoping your magazine could help me through the hard times. It be doing fine. I know when nobody care and I've got nowhere to go, I know I can come to The Beat Within and say what's on my mind. Thanks, Beat Within.

-Lil' Mississippi B4

From The Beat: We are always gratified to know that The Beat provides you with an outlet for self expression that helps you get through the rough times. Of course, like we always say, without you there is no Beat Within, so the thanks should come from us to you. When you say you were hanging with the wrong crowd, does that mean you're going to do things differently when you get out of here so that you don't have to come back? We hope so.

Colby's Church

In Colby's Church
I saw what the world could do
Make cripples walk
God make others talk in strange tongues
Get old arthritic grandmothers
Out they seats and dance to Colby's Black Church
Give dirty low-down sinners another chance
Give some folks the strength of twenty little men
In Colby's Black Church
I see what the world could do
Witnessed testifying
Heard gospel from African souls
In Colby's Black Church
I am the God of all ladies
Into speech and thunder

-Wal-greens B4

From The Beat: What does it mean to be the god of all ladies? Where is Colby's Black Church? Is it a real place, or is it in your mind? Is this your vision of the future? We wish we understood this piece better. Can you break it down for us?

sometimes

Sometimes I want to just be alone,
sometimes I want to cry,
sometimes I want to be safe,
sometimes I want to die,
sometimes I get so mad
I just want to fight,
but I know I have to let
the Lord fight my battles.

-Rebekah GU

From The Beat: Letting the Lord take care of it will definitely keep you out of trouble. Keep writing about your pains, that can help, too.

**When my moms
did bad, we
cried in
lonely rooms**



to ALL the Hitters

To all the hitters, people getting' hit, where are you? How would you respond if you got hit? What makes you want to go out and hurt someone?

I just want to tell The Beat readers that there are a lot of double agents that are trying to send SF into a war zone, and we're not helping a bit, all we're doing is helping them. So if y'all wanna live, make the right choices.

-Batman

From The Beat: We're not sure we understand why double agents would want to send SF into a war zone. Where are these agents from? What have they got against SF? Do you think it's possible that what is happening in SF is not the product of "outside agitators" (a charge we've heard from every government jurisdiction under attack since we were small), but of inside agitators — those who live here? We see the same war zones in every major city in the country, so we think something else is at work here, something that has to do with poverty, lack of employment opportunities, bad educations, and the easy availability of both drugs and guns. What do you think?

What's Wit' It

What's up ya'll? Me, nothin' really. Y'all like, "Who this cat name JD?" Well, I know everybody like who's this, and I wonder how this ninja look like, an' stuff.

Aight, let me break it down to y'all that's wondering. I'm 5'11" an' three-quarters, dark brown eyes with a goatee, long black hair that goes three quarters down my back. I weigh in at 215, almost rock solid.

I'm Samoan. Oh, I forgot, I'm an Aries. So there you go. Holla.

-Jd B5

From The Beat: What else comes with that handsome package? A good heart? A good head? A responsible man committed to staying out of trouble? Add these qualities to your resumé, and you'll have a choice of people hollering in your direction.

it's A done deal

It's a done deal now. No more waiting to go to trial. DA had no case, but it was only one charge I couldn't shake. Evidence proved it was involuntary manslaughter; that's what it was.

DA tryna play me and said I meant to kill. Tryna to prove to the judge it's an act of second degree murder on my little cousin. But only me, my little cousin and God knows what's real.

Could have went to trial, but I pled guilty for a charge that I was gonna get off top. But if I would have went to trial, they probably would have charged me with the gun and the live ammunition, and I would've went straight to the Y. The system thought they could catch me slippin'.

The lawyer was riding shot gun the whole way, ready for the case. And the DA thought I would be scared by throwing four years max in the Y in my face. On this court day I was ready for whatever. My prayers came true.

Now I gots to shoot for May 14 — go to the house or see you folks that's going to the Y. It's a done deal.

I feel so good because it's my birthday today. Good news all around. So I will holla at you guys from a week from today.

-Jd B5

From The Beat: We're really happy for you, JD. We know things could have turned out a lot worse for you. You say the DA was trying to scare you, but we think when they start tossing out time like candy ("Four years in the Y"), that's truly scary shhh. We know it got you down, too, so we're especially relieved that you don't have to go through that. Now, JD, so much of your future is in your own hands. That is like an opportunity of a lifetime — so please, please don't blow it! You know what you have to do. Only time will tell if you do it or not.

**I feel so good
because it's my
birthday today.
Good news
all around.**

The Life

Some drug dealers
Make bread like stars

Some get found in the back of schools and cars
To know where ya headed
You gotta know where you been

-Jay-Dumpa B4

From The Beat: So, where are you headed? Are you risking heading to prison by staying true to the street?

I Wish

I wish I was at home with my parents and family. I want to be at home playing video games, or playing basketball with my friends at the gym. That's all I used to do when I was out. I could play all day. Yeah that's what I used to do when I was out.

I liked basketball so much, that's all I would do when I was out. That's why I hope I get out of here so I can play college ball at city or Foothill.

-Sheik B5

From The Beat: We hope you get out, too, but getting out is only a small first step. After that, it's up to you to stay out. What changes do you plan to make in your life that will ensure that you can play basketball on the out, and not have to write about it on the "ins?"

for you, to me

Sometimes when I'm alone

I cry because I'm not at home

The tears I cry are bitter and warm

They flow with life but take no form

I cry because my heart is torn

But I find it difficult to carry on

Now who do you know that stops that long

To help another carry on

I think I found the one in my life to carry on

But I feel that me being with this one

I will never be alone

And that's to the end, to my demise

(Dedicated to Debbie)

-Young ee's B4

From The Beat: If you have found the girl of your dreams, what will you do to make sure you can be with her instead of writing about her? If she helps you to stay strong, how will you help her?

dear david inocencio:

What's really, Man? Why my so-called hardcore Beat pieces didn't make it, talking 'bout, "it don't reach or teach." It don't make sense.

Hey, Man, I'm just gonna keep it real. I thought this was a program for writers. I'm just exploring my skills, but I see how you get down. I thought it suppose' to be giving credit, but all I see from you is you favoring people. It's cool, but anyways, the real ones feel my writings even though it don't make it in.

But, Mr. David Inocencio, come to B5 and do a program and then I will pull out a Beat and show you what pieces don't reach or teach. Player, just to let you know I'm turning in the pieces you gave back, but holla at me, Man.

-Jd B5

From The Beat: We had to cut your last couple of sentences because they read like a (mild) threat. Now, a little history: David Inocencio is the founder of The Beat. He conducted the very first Beat workshop right where you're sitting, in B5. Now, a little reality: of course, sometimes things get into The Beat that violate our policies. That's because we are overworked, underpaid, and understaffed! Instead of David visiting you so you can give him a taste of B5, we're waiting for you to get out and come to The Beat, where you will see how hard this is to type, edit, take out inappropriate language and pieces, lay out all the units, print, fold, stack, and race to the next workshop. We know we make mistakes, but we don't think it's a mistake to keep out pieces that simply brag about the thug life. You're too smart for that. We've seen your work at its best, and we know what you're capable. Now, let us see more of that!

bad news — so, so real

This is bad news once again, coming at ya'll on some real shhh.

I want to let y'all know my life is so real and can't get no realer. I'm a rider and I always think about my family and the homies. Somebody asked me, "What about you and your future?" and that I can't make nobody else's future. So for once I think about me and only me.

I caught a case up in B5 for the block and it's really not worth it. Now I think about how I could be puttin' myself in danger, but I can never be scared.

I know, I know. I heard before never say never. I end this with some bad news, 'cause I'm bad news. I'm a rock nonstop off top, everybody knows that.

I heard good news and I heard bad news. Somebody got shot 25times and it's a coincidence I'm in B5 in room 25. I'm bad news.

-Bad News

From The Beat: We still don't learn what you see in your future, and what changes you plan to make to secure that future in freedom. We don't believe people are either good or bad news; people make their own good or bad news. So, what are you going to do to flip the script from bad to good? (Being in Room 25 and knowing that somebody got shot that many times is nothing more than coincidence. We're sure somebody's in room 1, and somebody got shot once; somebody's in room 2, and somebody got shot twice; etc.)

Response To The Beat

For my last piece, The Beat asks me a good question. "How do some people get out of the community?"

There are a number of ways people try to leave, but I think that you focus on the negative part of the community more than the positive such as the family atmosphere.

I also want to speak on the word "escape." People don't escape, they get released. There is no escaping, only releases.

To answer your second question, (Am I confident that I will walk away from this charge?), I never count my hens before the they hatched. I put no faith in this crooked system. I will deal with CYA or prison, same as everywhere else. First I have to see it to be ready for it.

To answer your next question, you are one of the few that can see life in B5 (super max), so I tend to accept The Beat Within more than any other program. But the fighting an' table flipping is an ongoing problem that I try to work on, but there need to be more outside influence in on it to help, don't you think?

-Batman B5

From The Beat: We think the more outside influences to help you, the better. This is one of the very few pieces we've read that attempts to take a "From The Beat" and answer it. We definitely appreciate that, Batman! We only wish you had spit some knowledge in this piece about how things could be different in here (or in other parts of the system) to provide you that positive influence you know you need. Is there anything that could be done inside that would better prepare you for life outside? Like what? (And finally, we've always been curious about Batman's relationship with Robin...)



Back In Time

Back in time to '99
Before my homie got hit with the nine
Before his life stopped an' the shooter got hit with a
nine and a dime
Before most of y'all started thuggin'

Only if I knew what my future would hold
But then my life wouldn't be real
This road was paved before my birth

-Batman B5

From The Beat: There is definitely truth in your belief that the path you're on was designed before you were born. But that doesn't relieve you of responsibility for your choices. Knowing that this is what's expected of you is only the beginning of the thought process. Now, can you come up with a way to redirect your feet onto another path, one of your own choosing — and one that leads away from jail and not towards it?

If I Grew Up Somewhere Else

Maybe if I would have stayed with my auntie in St. Francis Woods (no disrespect to my mama), I probably would not be in any of the situations that I'm in now, such as on probation; in and out of different family member's houses; smoking, drinking, popping pills, cutting school.

When I was with my auntie I did really well. I got good grades; I stayed out of serious trouble and wasn't thinking about taking or doing any type of drugs or drinking alcohol.

-Shannon GU

From The Beat: It's always so much easier to see what we should have done after we've done it. How old were you when you were living with your auntie? Why did you leave? Could you go back now if you wanted to?

Interview With M.Reezy And Juicy Loo

J-Loo: What's crackin', M. Reezy?

M-Reezy: Nothin'. Whats good wit' you?

J-Loo: Livin' life B5 style.

J-Loo: What the system got in store fo' you?

M-Reezy: Looks like I'm 'bout to be headin' to ROP in Nevada.

J-Loo: Do you think you ready fo' it. No females, no choppas, no drank.

M-Reezy: It's nothin'. I'm fittin' to go up there and pimp it, ya feel me?

J-Loo: What's gonna happen if you mess up?

M-Reezy: YA!

J-Loo: Well, be coo' up there, Man.

M-Reezy: Fa sho, right on.

M-Reezy: So what's crackin' wit' you? How's yo' case lookin'?

J-Loo: It's lookin' coo'. I think I'm fittin' beat this case and get homeward.

M-Reezy: Ok Ok

M-Reezy: Heard you have some female problems

J-Loo: Neva that, I got 99 problems but a female ain't one

M-Reezy: Same here. Keeps it pimpish, Man, been rockin' 'em like day fits, but I'm tryna ta be coo'.

J-Loo: Lets end it at that.

-M. Reezy and Juicy Loo B5

From The Beat: We find this little interview interesting, but also a little disturbing. You're going to "pimp ROP" but you're looking for a "ride or die" girlfriend which we cut. It's one thing to put yourself in a "ride or die" situation, but why would you want to put someone you love in that same place? We'd be a lot happier if you were looking for a "walk and live" girlfriend, we'd be a lot happier.

Waitin'

What wit' it, Beat? Me? Just chillin', writing to you again.

It's gonna be two more weeks before I go to trial. I hope it comes out as good as I want it to be. I'm waiting for that day to come when I hear those words: "Permanent release."

-Young Lance B4

From The Beat: If you walk out of here a free young man, what is in your plans to remain that way? How can you make that release a permanent one? Our experience is that it's easy to get out; it's hard to stay out.

Can't Stop

I can't stop doing what I do because it's all I know. That's why I'm in this hell hole. I tried to move far away from the block, but it wasn't far enough. So I had to go back and do what I do, because that's what I was raised to do.

I'm the youngest out the real crowd sitting in this hell hole thinking about it like the oldest. I took a dumb chance, but I can't stop doing what I do. But I'm going to try.

-Young Charles B5

From The Beat: We think if you start from where you ended ('I'm going to try') instead of where you started ('I can't stop...'), then you'll have a much better chance of success. We appreciate how difficult it is to leave the thing you know the best, but we also know how difficult it's been for you to do the thing you know the best, because it leads here. If you tried once to leave the block but didn't succeed, don't give up. From that experience, you now have more information about how to do it right. We don't know if you can pull it off or not, but we know that unless you do, your dreams will be snuffed out by a cruel system that doesn't care if you succeed or fail. Is there anyone who can help you move along a different road?

Real Talk

Guns, prostitutes, and drugs is what I got to talk about to make it in The Beat. I feel like Ice T when he made "Cop Killa." So tell me why my pieces don't hit the POW pages, or why none of these B5 member get a page.

From The Beat: It's not the subject you write about that determines if it's a POW (or anything else), but HOW you write about that subject. As someone who has had his own POW in the past, you should know this. Just describing what you see (or, worse, celebrating it) is not enough. We want to know what you think, how those things that you see affect you and your community, what the rest of the picture looks like, etc. As for B5 writers having their own pages, that is determined by the number of usable pieces from one writer. For example, because you have a large number of pieces in this issue (we're being charitable because you're a Beat OG), you have your own page! (But you know what, JB, we're still not going to publish your 7-page dialogue because it's six and a half pages of packing, shooting, cooking drugs, bagging and selling drugs, murder and betrayal, followed by a two-sentence moral: "In my opinion drug dealers don't last. You do dirt, you will be dirt." We like the conclusion, but we can't justify the seven-page introduction of violence that leads up to it. The Beat just does not have the resources to publish every piece we get, so we have to exercise a little judgment. If it makes you feel any better, we wouldn't have printed "Cop Killa" if it had been offered to us, either!

-Jd B5

Racism

I'm sick of people discriminating against us Latinos. I'm sick of people calling us "wetbacks." So, to all Latinos, Holla!

We gotta get together. We gotta fight and show everybody that we are as good as any other race in this place. So all you Latinos, keep your head up and don't come back to this place so we could keep our names out the government's mouth, and the rest of them shhh talkers.

This is a work from the homie Diablyto.

-Diablyto B4

From The Beat: We agree that there is a lot of anti Latino discrimination going on. There is also anti Black, anti Asian, anti Muslim, anti gay, anti women, anti "anyone different" going on all the time. What do you think we can do about this silliness that pits one race against another, one religion against another, one country against another, one part of town against another, one block against another? So much hate. So little time. Why do you think we seem to divide the world into "us" and "them," and then hate on the "them"?

Once Again

Once again Bad News is leaving the halls
But before I leave I want to say what's up
To the homies

I'm going to the Ranch and knock this stuff out
They don't want a hard hitta out there, man
Because once again my life is so, so real
On the outs and in the halls I set a reputation
For my hands (so ninjas know my reals)
So if you wanna run up on this brick go ahead
Don't say I didn't warn you or anybody else
I need to start controlling my anger because the law
Aka White people are taking violent crimes very
serious

(back to Bad News)

I got big and I ain't one of those

big for nothing ninjas

(I'm hard hittin')

(so so real)

I'm Bad News and ain't nothing

badder than Bad News

-Bad News B5

From The Beat: Okay, so you're good with your fists and you won't let anyone run up on you. But what's your plan for living a life in freedom? Experience tells us that just wishing to stay free is not enough. You need to have an idea of what you will be doing first, then second, then third, etc. You might be a hard hitter, but at the moment you're hittin' hard inside a juvenile jail. So, apparently, "they" are hittin' back harder. Maybe it's time to examine whether the hard-hittin' strategy is working for you.

**So all you
Latinos, keep
your head up
and don't come
back to this
place so we
could keep our
names out the
government's
mouth, and the
rest of them
shhh talkers.**

What I'm Going Through

I thought you was my ninja

But I guess you ain't

You ain't even writing a female

But yet asking everyone if I'm OK

You was my sistah

Since we was yay-hi.

But I don't even know anymore

I been locked up for over a month

And you supposed to be holdin' me down

But you ain't doing shhh, all you doin'

Is rollin' around town.

Not even knowin'

I'm in here with an upside down smile

Because of you,

I'm in here stressin'

Mad as hell,

So now you know,

This is what I'm going through.

-Jazze GU

From The Beat: It's hard to know who your real friends are until they're out to the test, and then it's too late. We're sorry this happened, but at least you know to take care of yourself first now.



Perfect

You're perfect for me; everything you do makes me smile
Because every second spent with you is worthwhile.
I love your eyes and the way that they shine
Because you don't tell lies, and you're so cute when you whine.
When you get mad with me you just can't hide it,
And, Baby, when you're sad I can always find it.
I never stop thinking about you; it's not fair
Because you're just perfect, no one else can compare,
Listen while I'm whisperin', holding you in my arms,
Filling you with all my charms,
Telling you I'll be there to take away your fears; just us.
I'll take you to your fantasy
Think about it, just you and me....

-Kurupt

From The Beat: You're very lucky to have this "perfect" girl on the outs. Is she waiting for you? Are you asking her to? Do you think it's easier for you to focus your attention on her while you're locked up, or easier for her to focus attention on you while she is free? When you get out of here, what changes do you plan to make in your life to make sure you will be able to stay with her instead of writing about her?

It's Just Me

I remember being posted on that block
Being dumped on and runnin' from cops
It don't stop, ninjas meet gun stocks
For tryna juke rocks
He got popped
Taped up scene, now the block's hot
Cops watch ninjas snitch non-stop
Send ninjas up state to get locked
Behind cages like peacocks
These streets do speak
Ninjas face time ninjas do leak
I take haters off they feet
That's just me

-Thinzel Washington

From The Beat: There is real drama in this piece, but also a kind of swagger, a boastfulness that worries us. You say you take haters off their feet, but we can see that you have been taken off your own feet. Here you are, stuck in time, talking 'bout what you do on the streets. There is something missing in your description, a kind of disconnect from reality that we find disturbing. We think you should give some serious thought to your own life and how (and where) you want to live it. Like the county, the state has places designed for your residential discomfort where you can write your heart out about the things that are going on outside.

Yeah Mama's Boy

The day I came in here all I thought about was my mama. The day she came to see me, I said mama. The day judge said I'm gonna detain you 'til pretrial, I cried mama. Every night I pray, I make sure I pray for mama.

There only two days I look forward to — those are the days I see my mama. When I'm out on the streets I think about all my homies. It's a shame I had to come to the Hall to think of my mom.

-R A Pissel

From The Beat: You're right, it is a shame that it took incarceration to realize that your mama should come first, but at least you've made the recognition before it's too late. How are you going to make it different the next time you make it back to the outs? How are you going to resist the temptation of your homies?

My Last Day

Today's my last day in The Beat. I'm out on Sunday. Hopefully I won't see y'all back in here. I just wanted to write a little something to say good-bye.

So anyways, see y'all later and I'll write some other time, but for now I'm out.

-Big Bird

From The Beat: We look forward to hearing from you — from the outs.

Dreams Are Real

A life filled with smoke, a lot of blunts and a little coke. Take some shrooms, I'm in the zone. Where do I go next? I know it ain't home, under the influence and out past curfew.

Watch for the police or be in handcuffs in the back seat, a place where I don't want to be on my way to a heartless place — to Hillcrest Juvenile Hall where they know my face. A thing of the past I can't erase. I prayed it wouldn't happen again, then I woke up happily in my bed. A dream.

-G-Ride

From The Beat: Is this a dream of a life lived or a life you hope to live? If your dream reflects the past, we understand why you are happy to wake up. If you're dream reflects the future, then you still are asleep! Maybe in a future piece you can take us into your future...

My Life

I am tired been in this Hall looking at my four white walls every day.

I was born in Nampa, Idaho but raised in East Palo Alto with my homies and family. I grew up on the streets where I say my homies raised me; they are my carnales.

Well I am in Hillcrest locked up and I know that my real carnales are my family.

-Payaso

From The Beat: People use the word "family" to mean so many things, and we're not sure whether your conclusion is saying that you've recognized that your family — your parents and other relatives — are your real carnales, or whether you value your carnales more than your family. Tell us more . . .

A Wise Man Once Said

"Money is God and cocaine is it
and unless you got stripes homeboy you ain't shhh!"

I now find that this is not the case
but an indestructible set of shackles around the feet of
my ever-growing race!

It's the power we give them to keep us in the past
it puts them in first place and keeps us in last

Realize we are putting ourselves in pause
We need a leader to release us from the jaws!
Where are you?

-Bandit

From The Beat: We feel the recognition you've made, but the leaders you're looking for are all around you — it's you and your peers who need to step to the challenge, who need to pull yourself out of the jaws of the system and return to your communities to help prevent others from being caught in the quicksand.

Never fall

Damn, I don't know what to write,
But still thinking about hittin' enemies on sight
I wonder when will I see the sunlight
And find some females that's right
But is it right being here for somethin' I didn't do
They say, "Nobody cares about you"
But I don't give a damn 'cause they trying to have me
stuck behind bars
But I'm still livin' for the cause
And remember never to fall
But like a ball they have me bouncing back and forth
But still hanging in groups of four
I wish I can kick down the door and rush the staff
But in less than four seconds
they have you on your back
And if I lack something then I must learn
Either do it or get burned
So my mind is constantly learnin' about society, the
world and the game

Some may think it's lame
But it's a habit of mine that can't be tamed
It's enough to give you an eye strain
And if the pain gets to your brain
Then take a hit of Mary Jane
I don't know when I'll reach the end of the lane
But as long as I live I'll always be insane in the brain

-Alv

From The Beat: When we read this, we have to wonder whether you think about the long-range future or only what's immediately in front of you. For example, you say you're here for something you didn't do (we can believe that), but that you're 'livin' for the cause." We know enough of that cause to know that it will always involve you doing things that could land you back in custody, and not for a short time. You say you'd rush the staff if you could get away with it, but for what purpose? Okay, you rush the staff — then what? It's the same with Mary Jane. Sure, that drug can dull the pain, but for how long? And then what? Do you ever wonder what you'll be doing in five or ten years? Do you ever wonder how you'll get there?

Livin' Life To The Fullest

I hear a lot of people saying God has a plan for everybody in life. But I think we choose our own life to live. It's up to us how we live it. Some choose to live that perfect life because they want to, or because it ran in the family to be successful.

I enjoy livin' my life because it's full of adventures. Some criticized me because of the way I grew up, dressed, and my attitude. I can't hold anyone accountable for my actions, 'cause I choose to do what I do best, and that's be a criminal and menace to society. But people only see my struggles and never see the good things about me.

I don't give a shhh about what people think about me 'cause I know who I am in the inside.

What's up, homies? Take care. I'll be back downstairs soon. Much love and respect.

-Indio

From The Beat: Where do you think the choices we make come from? Can we choose options we've never learned about? Do you ever wish you had more choices to select from? Here's something to think hard about, Indio. You say that being a criminal and a menace to society is what you do best. And yet, here you are, captured and isolated from that society. If this is what you do best, it seems like you better develop some other skills, because objectively, you can't be all that good at what you say you're good at. Even more important, it is our hope that you be exposed to choices you've never considered because you didn't know they were available. It's a big world, Indio. We hope you get to experience some of it.

Feelings

Everyone has feelings. Right now it's my turn to write.
Why is it I can't get you out of my head when I'm lying down at night?

I can be a playa, a gangsta, and even a thug,

But I wouldn't be anything without your love.

I been with girls and see how they get down.

They be tryin' to play me when I'm not even around,

So I did what I had to, and I played them too.

But to tell you the truth I wouldn't do that to you.

I can put up a front and try to tell lies,

But you can see right through that and probably ask me why.

We have a good thing going, but I'm incarcerated.

When I talk to other girls, I can see that you hate it,

But I'm starting not to do that; I don't think it will happen again.

They're just my homegirls, but you're my girlfriend.

-Kurupt

From The Beat: We can see that you've got it bad for this girlfriend, but at the same time, we detect a little doubt about your own relationships with other girls. You say you're starting not to be interested in other girls, and that you don't think you'll stray in the future. Will this reassure her, or worry her?



Why

Why must life go on
Why must I live so long
Why must I respect you when you don't respect me
I thought you knew that you're like everyone else
Didn't your mother ever tell you not to talk
Down on other people
Well, guess not
Why do we know as the next generation act and
Try to be someone we're not
Why must we kill future Pres's
And be left with nothing but dead Pres's
Can we open our eyes and see the world as it is
Violence is here and it ain't gonna stop
Not 'til we stop
But 'til that day
Let violence live on.

-Youn 1

From The Beat: Well, Youn 1, in answer to your second question, you really haven't lived "so long" yet. And one big worry we have when you write, "Let violence live on," is that you won't live that long. It's one thing to describe what you see ("Violence is here and it ain't gonna stop"), but another thing to cheer for that violence. We, too, see that violence will never end, but that doesn't mean that we have to engage in that endless violence. Or does it? Can you take yourself out of this violent picture? How?

A Wonderful Mom

This is a picture of a wonderful person and that's my mom. She is so nice to me. She forgives me for everything I do. I love her with all my heart and I won't let anything tear us apart.

She's the one who has been there for me through all the problems I have had. She's always been there, that's how you are supposed to have a relationship with a wonderful mom.

-Little J-Roc

From The Beat: What do you think is the best way to show your appreciation of your mother's love and support? What's it going to take to be — and stay — out there with her?

**Why must we kill
future Pres's
And be left with nothing
but dead Pres's**

Freedom

I want to be FREE, but it's not my time to be FREE. I'm scared because when I get FREE, I will go crazy. But I am going to try to do good so FREEDOM is all I think about every day.

I found out today that I will be going to stay with my aunts, and I found out my little sister hates me, but I love her. And my mom, I love her, and my brother I love, and my grandmother, I love her.

-Rebekah GU

From The Beat: What do you think will make you go crazy? Is it because you have been kept from doing the things you want to do for so long that you don't think you'll be able to resist them? Why would your sister hate you, you sound like a very loving person? How do you show your family the love you feel for them?

My big brother

When I look in the mirror I see him — he is my big brother . . .
people say I look like him, but more like my mother
My brother's name is Eddie and he is only sixteen years old
he grew up in deep Oakland and that's why he always drankin' an' smokin'
He lived on the block where in Oakland it's always hot!
All you hear at nighttime is people screamin' and gunshots!
My brother is going through a lot of shhh
and I wish that he can understand it
but the things that happen in his life everyday is no game to play
Life in the ghetto won't last that long
but if you're someone like Eddie just stand up and be strong!
I'm written this poem to let you know there's someone who cares
someone that got much love for you and always be there!

-Kween Tiffany

From The Beat: You step up and show your brother some big support, but can you suggest to him other ways of making it out of the 'hood? What are the ways you, yourself, are going to step up when you get released? Can you set an example for him to follow?

To My Lovin' Number One

You are earth, wind, and my fire
And I love you for that
There's nothing that can take your place
I live for you, I breathe for you, my life revolves around you
When we're apart, I feel like Sisqo, my life is incomplete
When my heart skips a beat, you're the extra beat
That keeps my heart on track
When I'm feeling sad, you're there to make me feel new
I love you for being you, and I thank you for loving me
For me.

-Youn 1

From The Beat: We have said before that you are lucky to have someone you love waiting for you. How will you express that "thanks" you have for her in a way that makes her know that you truly love her more than you love the life that led you here?



Countdown

24 hours is all I got left
then I dust off my shoulders, no mo' stress
tired of lock downs, hours an' TRGs
cooped up in my room wit' no damn key
I don't stress my time, no mo'
'Cause 5 pm is the time I gotta go
18 and terminated from probation wit' no ties
it's betta that way 'cause I'm a hoodlum in the court's eyes

I hit my town, touch down and stay low key
'Cause East Palo Alto ain't no picnic and I ain't Yogi
It's zone or go home in my town, so I stay lavish
So when I hit the door I'm to the block to get cabbage
I'm out this piece, I'm like The Beat Without
Back to my area where ninjas can't run they mouth.
Click-click.

-Lyrical Weapon

From The Beat: We are, of course, excited for you to be leaving the Hall, and we wish you nothing but good luck. But, at the same time, when we read that you'll go "to the block to get cabbage," we fear for your future. Now that you're 18 (or about to be), the consequences for doing whatever got you here will be quite different, and much worse. We know that you know this in your head, but we fear that you don't feel this in your heart. We would love to get Beat Without pieces from you, but we would hate to get those pieces with a state prison return address.

Off To CYA

I just sit and wait with the homeboy to see Mr. Rasmussen come into the door and say, "The grim reaper is here!" That means it's time for us to leave to the Y, a brand new environment and well-known battlegrounds!

And I would just like to take time to thank all that have helped me along the way. A special thanks to Mr. Lynch, Mr. Tolo and to the rest of the staff, Mr. Romero, Mr. Leonard, Strip, G, Ms. G, Ms. Chavez, Ms. Prichie, Ms. C, Clark, Charles, and Mr. Huntington! And there is much more but I'm running out of time, but you know who you are.

Take care and stay up! Much love and respect.

From The Beat: The Y's no joke, and we wish you luck, but defining it in advance as a battleground is a self-fulfilling prophecy — if you go there looking to get down, you'll get down. However, we know many who have found a way to navigate through their time at the Y and come out the other side more committed than ever to do what it takes to stay on the outs (Mervyn and Will, who you know from The Beat, among them). Take care of yourself, Oso.

-Oso

Bad Day

One day chilling with da homies
Drinking on some 40s
Next thing I knew
I was at the corner store
Got some flajos

Then went to a taqueria to get some tacos
Then some vatos came talking shhh
I had to put them in check
Then the cops caught me on da block
They told me to stop
Now I'm at the hall doing time
Because of that day when I committed that crime

-JP

From The Beat: We're not sure what "dat crime" was that you committed, but we guess it had something to do with putting "some vatos in check." Was it worth it? Would it be worth it if you had to do a year's time? Five years? When does it stop being worth it? When your reaction to someone else's words leads to your loss of freedom, we think that's too high a price to pay. What do you think?

**They told me
to stop
Now I'm at the
hall doing time**



Precious Memories

I sit here and dwell on precious memories
Wishin I had just a fifth of Hennessy
If I died would you still remember me?
When I was thuggin' and doin' it like a G
When I was sittin' here waiting to be released
Or when I was runnin' around
wearin' Dickies wit' a crease
I was gang related and disturbing the peace
Always holdin' it down for San Francisco streets
I never thought I'd get caught by them dirty police
And I never thought I'd
be in jail wearin' some magic grease.

-Dreamer

From The Beat: Dirty police? Dirty for catchin' you for being gang related and disturbing the peace? Seems like they were straight up doin' their job. Now that you have been caught up, what are you going to do to make sure the next time around you fall into the same traps?

**I know that you've
been hurt before
But this is no excuse
for you to ignore
The seed that cupid
planted**

Me

Appearance, rough, raw, and rugged
They think I'm addicted to thuggin'
But inside it's my family I'm lovin'
Never gave a nothin'
About no one or nothin'
Except family and money
Life's a dirty game, ain't nothin' funny
Boys close, but enemies closer
I'm on the edge, but it's almost over
Crazy thoughts on my mind, can't lose my composure
With these thoughts replayin' over and over
But I can't give up, I gotta take it like a soldier.

-Peanut Head

From The Beat: We're not sure where you're going with this, PH. Who thinks you're addicted to thugging? Are you? If not, who are the enemies you keep close? What would giving up mean? Or, more important, what does NOT giving up mean?

everyone has feelings

Are you gonna be the one to leave me, Baby Girl?
For it's only you I got in this world
At night I stay dreaming about us two
Thinkin' about all the things we could do
Starting to think different, with your lips against mine
Never had these feelings, guess I'm a gangsta falling in love
When I'm alone in my room, it's you I'm thinking of
Holding you in my arms would just feel so right
So you do be thinking about me at night
I wish I could see your smiling face
You're the only beautiful thing in this place
You know what's on my mind while I sleep
Those cute brown eyes with emotions so deep
We would fall asleep together, I'll keep you warm
All night long always keepin' you safe from harm
You're so close to me, but yet so far away
But we gonna be together on the outs, somehow, some way

-Kurupt

From The Beat: If you continue to focus on making a life with the woman you love, you should give up your name, "Kurupt." You won't be able to maintain both a decent family life and a corrupt one, so you'll have to make a choice. We can see what choice you would make today, but only time will tell whether you'll keep that choice as your priority when you taste free air. We hope so, but it's all up to you.

Be Careful

Be careful she'll get you
Like she got him, before you
She'll do this with her
Enchanting smile and her devious eyes
She'll block out your cries
And swallow your pride
She tell you what you
Want to hear, and make you forget your fear, while
She kisses away your tears
Her warm embrace will keep
You close and on a constant chase
She'll tell you she's your sweetest sin
But really it's just about to begin
She'll capture your full attention
But she's got all the wrong intentions
She'll play with your mind
Body and soul now she's got
You stressin' and rollin' another bowl
She'll make it up to you with a tender kiss
But soon it won't be her you'll miss
Fortunate you got her ridin' by your side
While you watch the sunrise
Eager to spend more time with her
But she too busy pickin' out another mink fur
She'll see you only enough to keep you wanting more
And she'll impress you
With her moves on the dance floor
But don't get too attached
For this will never last
Soon you'll just be old news in her past
Don't fall for her precious love
'Cause this female is no angel sent from above
Thought you had it all
Now you ain't even a booty call
She'll use you while she needs you
And then you're though
And all she'll have to say is, "Boo-hoo."

-Ashley

From The Beat: Damn, this is a foreboding tale — almost enough to have us swearing off our own relationships. What does she get out of all of this? Is it that she wants the money, or the attention, or the ego boost? What do folk need to do in order to make sure they don't fall for someone like the woman you describe?

Cry For You

Can I cry for you, can I feel you pain
Can I wipe the tears away from your eyes
I wanna be like light in the skies
When you're feeling mad and sad
Can I help you when you're in the time of need
When the world is full of greed
Can I be the warmth of your touch
Can I have the grace of your presence
Can I be the one you talk to when you have problems
When we're apart my day is very bad
But every time we're together you make my day
Years from now we're gonna still be together
And raise a healthy family
Because you are my light and reason for my self-being
I think about you all the time 24/7
Day in and day out you're on my mind
I think about the little time you were here
Since we're far apart don't have no fear

-Youn 1

From The Beat: Where is this love of yours? How long will it be before you are united? What are you going to do to make sure that you remain that way?

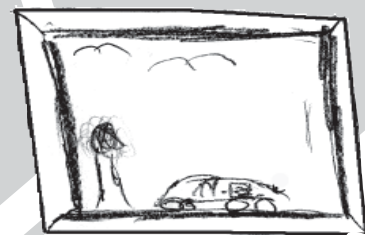
**I'ma try my
hardest to my
change my ways
So next year I
can be home on
your birthday**

MY sitting soul

I've got a sitting soul
And stories that need to be told
I live right now
But sometimes I don't know how
I can rob, steal, kill
All to have a meal
I wonder where in life I'll go
Walking around with my chin off the flo
I keep my head held high
And watch the birds in the sky
My sitting soul wants to escape
But I ain't ready to die
I want to be free
To live and be me
My sitting soul is waiting
But I'm running out of time

-Youn 1

From The Beat: This is a fascinating poem, Youn 1. Why is your soul sitting? What will it take to bring it upright, standing tall? And why are you running out of time? Just keep looking up, and things are bound to get brighter.



Sorry Mama

I appreciate what you gave me
Even though I didn't listen
I appreciate you payin' my fee
Your love is never missin'
I apologize for all I've done
Didn't realize how it affected you
I apologize for being this kind of son
Sorry for acting like a foo'
I'ma try my hardest to my change my ways
So next year I can be home on your birthday

-Peanut Head

From The Beat: What do you think you will find the most difficult in trying to change your ways? We hope it's not one of those commitments that starts "one of these days" or "when I get older." Change is something that is ongoing, so we'd be happier if we read, "I AM changing my ways." Why do you think it took this cold experience to bring you around to wanting to change?

What I See

(Dedicated to Broken Glass)
With my eyes closed I can see
We have a chance to discover ecstasy
But the clouds of doubt have made you blind
So you are afraid of the emotions that you may find
I know that you've been hurt before
But this is no excuse for you to ignore
The seed that cupid planted
In hopes that we would show
This infant emotion deserves to grow
So why don't you let it breathe
A neglected flower will wither and on its own it will surely die,
But with honesty, passion, and mutual respect we can soar beyond the sky

-D

From The Beat: Do you know Broken Glass on the outs, or is this declaration of love based solely on her (amazing) writing? Whether it's appropriate advice for her or not, it is still good advice. We agree that pain is a part of love, and should not be a reason to give up on future relationships. On the same hand, each person knows his or her own experiences best, and all of us are guided by our experiences.



Being True

Loving someone who's locked up, it's not child's play
Loving him is a high price to pay
It's loving him, but you have nothing to hold
Staying true to him, without having to be told
Laying alone with all of your fears
Falling asleep with your eyes full of tears
You're at home with the radio playing and the lights go dim
It's hard sleeping at night thinking and picturing him
But he just sits and thinks about you
Thinking about you on the outs and everything you do

-Kurupt

From The Beat: What's interesting about this piece is that you are writing it from her perspective, but you are talking about yourself as "someone who's locked up." Yes, one of the worst things about being in jail is the separation it forces on you from the ones you love. It's one of those pains we wish more young people would remember when they're out, so that they'd think twice about doing something that would bring them back here, and separate them again.

Played

When I got the news, my hoped straight crashed
Thoughts of getting out got shot down real fast
Was told the next two years would be at ROP
Even though I wrote a letter beggin' free, free, free,
Been out nothin' but four days in the past four years
No chance to get back or come up, these are my fears
I sit in my cell knowin' I'm being played
But nothin' I can do but sit back and count the days
Every day I wish I could turn back the hands of time
Wish I didn't run up in the 7/11 with that nine
Now I can just sit and wait
Pray while the courts decide my fate

-Baby L

From The Beat: It's interesting that you say you're being played while at the same time saying you've only been out of custody four days in the last four years! We have to ask: who's playing whom? Since you can't turn back the hands of time, why not put your energy into doing a successful program, even if it's two years in ROP? There's not a word in here about your own responsibility for you being where you are (and where you're going). Why's that?

Peace Be With You

My thoughts stop
My first story
A word to the wise
Wherever you are
Runnin'
Runnin' from the unchanged
Where to go
Paranoid all the time
A new face
A new place
A new past
I can't erase
You laughed
I cried
We said our
Goodbyes
Then you died
(dedicated to Bobby K)

-KT

From The Beat: This is a mysterious poem — it seems to hint in so many directions, but never follows those threads. Did running lead to his death? What was he running from? Have you ever run from anything? What is the word to the wise?

Life

Sometimes I live a life of shame
Not really wanting to expose my name
Because life is one messed up game
Some come as winners, other are losers
But happiness is a lie
Because we all will eventually die.

-The Poet

From The Beat: It is true that we all will die, but why not seek happiness before you get there? Where does your shame come from? We want more . . .

Life

So much to life that one must know
So many roads that one can't go
Every day is a new challenge for me and you
Very little time and so much to do
Darkness of days and delightfulness of nights
While here on earth we try to do what's right
Questions asked and answers answered
The sun is bright and fire burns
If you like to gamble with life go ahead take your turn
My life is too expensive I'll have fun
Can I do this and can I do that is what's being asked
The world is like taking a vase and can't put it back
Or breaking glass that can't be put back together
Throughout our lives we've had bad weather
But we'll overcome the storms
We live to be the best we can be
I love you and you love me
In one year I know where our love will be
Me and you and me and me that'll be our destiny
Can't imagine me without you
You're my baby girl, boo!

-Youn 1

From The Beat: It sounds like you have thought a lot about your future, and you've decided to draw a sharp distinction between your past and your future. Some day, Youn 1, we'd love to read a longer piece from you detailing the journey you've made from your unhappy past, to your incarcerated present, to your bright future.

Looking at these walls make you think a lot

Been out nothin' but four days in the past four years

Not A Rap, Just Thinking

Looking at these walls make you think a lot
I try to think positive but that money's on my mind
So when you look at me you see that green in my eye
Blowing so many clouds that fill the sky
That's why the town be foggy
Gotta call the task 'cause can't no police stop me
They taking my pencil so I can't write any more

-G

From The Beat: We always find it amazing that people who are already caught and behind walls still say things like, "can't no police stop me." Maybe "no police" can stop you, but some police already did! If you think you can keep doing what you were doing without facing the same consequences, then you're living in a dream world.

Failure

The finish line
Game time
Go ahead, write the rhyme
Be on the grind
It's all in your mind
Have to focus
Forget the diagnosis
It's all just a drug
Induced psychosis

-Kt

From The Beat: If it's all in your mind, what do you need to do to have a clearer state of mind so that you're able to handle all the things that come your way?

disappeared

Keith
Now you see it
Now you don't
You can't touch me
Hang with the best of them
You can't mess me sometimes
I feel like I just murdered myself
Ninjas got heat for me
Enemies tack it help
And if I see you at the
Funeral I reach out for
You that man up in the
Corner threw him to the corner
He's just another foreigner
All in my mix don't have
The slightest damn thing how
I'm feeling about shhh

-Misunderstood

From The Beat: There are a lot of hints here, but not much meat to grasp onto in order to respond. There is one particularly deep line — "I feel like I just murdered myself." There's so much in those seven words, such a raw expression of pain and anguish. How do you feel? Some of it comes through here, but it's lost in a cloud of lines we can't quite make out — let us know exactly how you feel.





Her Green Eyes Warm My Heart

I wish I could see my girlfriend, Kira, again. Her green eyes warm my heart and I wish could see her, because she always made me feel good when I was down and I will always love her forever and ever.

-Jason

From The Beat: Where is Kira? Will you be able to see her when you get out? Why don't you write her a letter or a poem and send it to her? Then call her when you get home!

i had my stomach pumped every day

When I used to do drugs, I was in a bad condition. I used to shoot up twenty ounces of speed a day. It was like I had my stomach pumped every day. I didn't eat anything but Tootsie Rolls. It was a bad time of my life. I like to eat apples.

-Ex-Condo

From The Beat: Why were you living like that? You wrote that that was a bad time for you. Are things better for you now on the outs? If your life still isn't better, what would make it better? What do you want your life to be like?

gangs changed MY Life

Gangs changed my life. Because of gangs and my poor choices about them, I am unable to associate with certain people.

When I was little, I would kick it with anybody. I got into gangbanging just by being in the wrong place and hung out with some people. Now everybody thinks I'm some big gangbanger. I have even seen some of my homies fall hella deep.

-Mitsuo

From The Beat: Can you make some new friends who encourage you to stay out of any mess? You don't need to follow your homies by falling hella deep behind them!

Stay Out Of Here

What's up, y'all? I'm Chunky, getting out in ninety days

I wish I could be on da block, smokin' dat haze

But that's my old life

I plan to change and stop causin' strife

Good versus bad

Happy versus sad

I need somebody to fall back on

Maybe my ninjas

It's a shame what these people are tryna do to me

They tryna keep me in here for hella long and to

send me to ROP

I have a good mother

And we really care for each other and love one

another

Please, younguns, stay out of here

It's not for you!

-Chunky

From The Beat: You still hear the lure of the streets, as well as your mother's call, pulling you in two ways. Do you feel like you're being pulled apart? What is it about the streets that you find so hard to resist? Could you love life without the haze? What else about life appeals to you? You have a powerful imagination that you could tap into, but you also seem to love the street life. Why don't you try writing about what you've learned from the streets and what kind of future you see if you continue to live the street life?

Out Of My Mind

I was drunk; I was high

I was thinking out of my mind,

going crazy, insane

Going out of my mind

I was cruising down the highway

Sippin' on some vodka

Lookin' all crazy, crazy, crazy

Goin' insane

Lookin' in the sky

Thinkin' of you

Sippin' on some brew

Getting pulled over

Now I'm wearin' orange and blue

That life I was livin' was straight-up crazy

Not a life for me

So I'm gonna change

-Guera

From The Beat: What are you going to do about getting your life together? What about a job? What about going back to school? How can you stay away from the life that just doesn't seem to be for you?

i do have culture shock

Yes, I do have culture shock, because my mom is not racist, but she feels that it is enough Black women to be with, instead of going out with other races. I will date a white girl and girls from other races, but my wife is going to be a Black African queen and I will do anything she asks me to do — be a loving husband, help with the kids and really appreciate her, like I am supposed to.

I won't hit her or disrespect her. Don't get me wrong, couples do have problems or fight, but that's just my opinion.

-Chunky

From The Beat: Chunky, you always amaze us! Sometimes you write like you couldn't live without the street life and other times you write about the wonderful life you'd like to have. Another part of you is always reading everything you can get your hands on! We hope you develop all parts of your life, so you can get to know everything you are capable of and brilliant at! We hope you'll be a happy husband and father some day.

My Tattoo

The first time I got my first doggie tattoo, I was happy. I got it on my hand. It was nice. I got it when I was twenty-six years old. I fainted when the needle hit a vein and I lost a quart of blood. But now the tattoo of a poodle is gone.

I got a new tattoo over it; it is the color of my skin. So now you can't see it. But now I'm going to get a bulldog tattoo on my head, when I am old enough.

-Fresh Gold Fishes

From The Beat: Nice imagination. Now, what does the bulldog symbolize?

Don't Enter My World

Don't enter my world, please. If you enter, the only thing you will see is pain. Pain flying everywhere. I cannot stop it. My life is full of pain, sadness and anger. I don't want no more pain, 'cause it hurts a lot.

My family gave me all this pain that I have to deal with now. I just want this pain to go away. Now I am living in a foster home. I don't have no family no more.

-Shorty

From The Beat: You don't really write about what kind of pain your family has caused you. What is life like living in a foster home? What can you do to make the best of your life?

steal to survive

When I was a little kid, I was locked my room for a long while, so I snuck out my window and went to the store to steal food.

From then on I felt like I had to steal to survive. From then on I had an impulse to steal. Anything that I felt I wanted, I took. I am in the Hall for stealin'. I hope that I can learn to stop.

-Luca

From The Beat: Can you get a job, when you get out, so you can save your money and buy yourself whatever you want or need? Then you will be proud of what you have, 'cause you bought it with your own money!

I have a good mother And we really care for each other and love one another

Vietnamese Thang

In the past I've been dating a lot of Latinos, which be Salvadorian! I guess it a Viet thang to just date Asian foo's. My dad hated my boys. That's why now I don't try to bring 'em to mah crib. The boy I'm with now is from El Salvador and my father put a restraining order on him, because he got caught in my room, like, around 2:00 AM in da mornin'. My dad called 5-0 on him twice, and da second time he jumped out da window. I live in a town house. My room be upstairs, know what I mean?

Well, I used to have this Viet boy and my dad hated him. Now he's in training for a job in Orlando and my dad wants to accept him, but he's too far and I'm with my baby. Juan, Te amo con todo mi corazon. (I love you with all my heart.) Just wanna let ya know dat.

-Lil' Mami

From The Beat: Sometimes it seems like dads are gonna hate on all your boyfriends. Maybe it's a daddy-of-a-precious-daughter thang, like no me n are good enough for their daughters. Maybe it would help if you bring your boyfriends home and introduced them to your dad, invite them to dinner so your dad and they can get to know each other. Will that make things better? But as long as you're living in your dad's home, if he doesn't allow your boyfriends in your room, maybe you shouldn't invite any guys in. That's fair, don't you think?

Interview Between Chunky And Travoy

Chunky: Travoy, why are you trying to act so good now? You are being a square. You don't hang out no more with your old potnas. What's happening to you?

Travoy: Man, leave me alone. I'm trying to change my ways and do right, be a respectable person and do something with my life.

Chunky: Man, you sucka, man. Once you get in the game, there is no changing. Ride or die for this. You had fun robbin' people, stealin'. You gonna change you life for this? Ninja, please!

Travoy: Man, whatever I want — things in life — a wife, maybe, like, I may marry a little ghetto girl. You know, a car, house! I have dreams! I'm at the crossroads between life and death, and if you're not helping Chunky, leave me alone!

-Chunky and Travoy

From The Beat: Just like friends don't let friends drive drunk. Friends don't lead friends down the wrong path. Ya mean? Will you be a friend to yourself?

I'm Going Home

I'm going home

You don't have to read my dumb-ass poem

I should be leaving in the next week

I have plenty of people to seek

I'll write to my ex in jail

Hoping and praying he'll get out on bail

-Guera

From The Beat: Do you think that you'll be able to stay out of the Hall? How can you make your future better than your past?



black hole

I walked my way in a black hole and now I can't get out of it. I look around; all I see is black. I came to this place by making bad choices. No matter what I do, I am still in the black hole. All that matters to me is getting out of this black hole.

The only way I will get out of this is by just dying, so I don't have to be in this black hole.

-Shorty

From The Beat: Do you believe that in due time, you can get out of this black hole? Do you think that in due time, things will get better? Why or why not?

ALL i cqn do

Why, when I'm at my worst
It feels like it's better?
Yeah, people be on my back
But I don't pay
No attention to dat
Then this always happens
I finally take advice
And hope for something nice
But, no
So I end up shootin' the dice
Once again
Why is it like this?
I don't know
All I can do
Is sit
And reminisce

-Gata

From The Beat: Life keeps moving, and some things change in your mind as your opinion of them changes and you are changing, too! Now, what can you do to make the best of what you're working with?

Moses Said:

God said in the Bible:
"Let my people go"
But I'll settle for a comb
'Cause people keep laughin'
At my messed-up fro

-Eli

From The Beat: You don't ask for much, do you? Who are your people? Do you think they need freeing? If so, how?

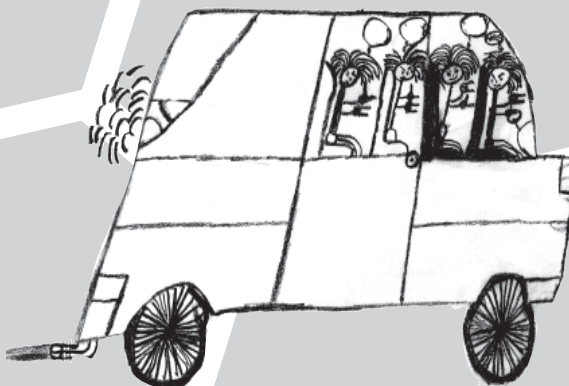
dad

An experience that changed my life was when my dad left my family ten years ago! It changed my life for better and for worse. For better, because I've been through a lot and I have friends all over Marin County. For worse, I think that him leaving put a lot of anger in me and that's a big part of my current situation.

Also, since the last time I was in here, I have met him and established a relationship with him, which I hope to keep.

-Spoon

From The Beat: Can you have your new friends in Marin and your dad, too? Why or why not? Does your dad know you're in Juvy? How does he feel about it? Can having your dad back in your life help fill your emptiness and keep you from getting in trouble on the outs again?



Hard Headed

A person who could change their way of doing things in life. Yo, they should get locked up for a min, until they get spooked or sick and tired, bored to the brain. Then they pro'lly will learn to not get in trouble again or get into trouble again. But most don't learn from a mistake they make, because of how hardheaded they is. Yah!!!

-Pham

From The Beat: What about you, Pham? Now that you've been locked up, what have you learned? Do you think the real test will be when you get out? Will you have the strength and motivation to stop doing whatever brought you into Juvy, so you can stay free?

You're A Brother To Me

I remember the day
I chased you down the street
You were running sooo fast
You looked as if you would fall over your feet
Butt bouncin' everywhere
I just didn't care
Chunky, you gotta learn
Or next time you won't have a turn
Be good
You know I've always understood
Be a good boy and don't fight
Because you know that just ain't right
I'll always care for you
And throw it down when I have to
I love you a lot, Chunky
And you know that day I would not have cut
You're a brother to me
Just hope everyone else will see

-Guera

From The Beat: We hope Chunky likes it, and listens to you about him not having a turn next time. We also hope you take your own advice and not fight. Just don't let your friends somehow influence you into coming back to Juvy any more!

you gotta
learn
Or next
time you
won't
have a
turn

Animals

I cannot read because I'm a stupid. I like to eat goldfish that are swimming in my toilet. I like to eat, cat. Meow, meow. Ruf, ruf, ruf, oink, oink, oink. Moo, moo, moo.

-Smart Kid in Marin

From The Beat: What else do you think about?

i never used drugs Again

What changed my life was when I heard that my dad and brother died. It changed me, because they both died from drugs and after I heard that they died from ODing, I never used drugs again after that, because I thought that I might OD.

-Slop E

From The Beat: That is so sad about your dad and brother. It's wonderful that you gave up drugs. Do you have any suggestions for other people who want to stop using drugs?

My Girl

What changed my life is me. I started realizin' my life and I changed because my girl has helped me be me. I am Snake.

-Snake

From The Beat: Who are you? What did your girl teach you about yourself? Do you like the person who your girl helped you become? Why or why not?

i'm recognizing the pain i've caused

It's Young Black and I started to think of my life
Every night I read the Bible
And pray to the Lord in the name of Jesus Christ
And I'm recognizing the pain I've caused
And the wrong that I did in my life
And by recognizing all this
I feel that I'm a make it all right

-Black Jack

From The Beat: Recognizing that something isn't right is the first step. Now, what will you do in order to right the wrong? How does God enrich your life? Do you follow any or all of his teachings?

For My Boys And Girls In Marin, And To 150!

Today I am writing to tell you about my boys Ryan, Black Jack, Kalvyn, Eli. We stay holdin' it down for Marin. And my girls Shannon, Alex, we stay puttin' it down.

You guys always give Piece of the Week to 150 Crew, but we taking over. One of my boys is going to get it and win!

Don't get me wrong, people over there got mad skills — Lay-Lay, Ima, Weezy, Sneezie. But we just once want to win. We holdin' it down, because we hyfie. So please, can you give one of us Piece of the Week? Lastly, keep doin' good, Fireball, Traviesa, King Yella, Ray Ray. Keep it comin'.

-Chunky

From The Beat: Write your hearts out, Marin. Shannon has gotten Piece of the Week several times and The Antichrist has once or twice an so has Guera. Just write your heart out one of these times, Chunky, and you'll get yours. But you can't write rhetoric "I'm down to ride, bla bla bla. If you write something that's really heartfelt, you'll get POW too! Good luck!

ONLY time cqn tell

Only time will tell
If my life will be any better
If me and my man will even
Grow together
Only time will tell
If I'll ever get out of here
Whenever that time happens

-Gatita

From The Beat: You'll get out. If your man and you are growing together, are you cool with that? Or if you are growing in different ways, can you accept it and build your own life? We hope so. Great luck.



the mission

This is a mission, not a small-time thing
Let me tell you 'bout what happened when the phone went "Ring!"
Well, I was coolin' at the crib wit' my girl, Susan
Everything was going just accordin' to plan
When the phone rang
Yo, I couldn't believe it
Told myself to ignore it, forget it, just leave it
Just when things had started going great
It rang again
So I picked up the phone
"Yo, who the heck is this?"
Somebody said, "This is serious business.
There is a tape in your mailbox between your door.
Take the tape out the mailbox and put it in yours"
I listened to the tape and my mouth just dropped
Somebody said the tape was self-destruct
I pressed, "Eject," but the tape was stuck
Oh, well, what the heck?
I just cleaned up the mess
Opened up the closet, grabbed my bullet-proof vest
Loaded up the sawed-off double-barrel Rambo knife
Wit' the hunting apparel
Threw on my trench, kissed my girl goodbye
She said, "Oh, no, Eli, don't go." You might die
She started cryin' and huggin' on me
I gotta do what I gotta.

-Eli

From The Beat: This is a great story until the last line. You're very imaginative. This sounds like it belongs in one of those, "Choose Your Own Adventure" books. You know, you've got mad writing talent and we hope you put it to use.

Pauline!

I'm taking time today to write The Beat for my friend Pauline Craig, who has helped Marin a lot. She brings in books and everything for us and I really appreciate her for all the stuff she has done for Marin County Juvenile Hall and all of you should know my friend died —Jay Jay, because he got shot by some people and when I was missing him, she was there to comfort me when I needed it and I love her for that.

It's hard when you lose a very close friend and you have no one to talk to and no more hanging out, trying to get females grindin', shinin' hanging out together. But he's gone, so I have to move on.

Thanks, Pauline, for helping us out. What's up, Sneezie? RIP, Jay-Jay.

-Chunky

From The Beat: Yes, Pauline is one of a kind! She is by far one of our favorite colleagues. The only way to repay her for her kindness is to get out and stay out of Juvenile Hall!



Let God Take Care Of It!

To any and everybody — if you have a problem, just let God take care of it. It's probably a lot of you who don't believe in God, because you are in jail. You have no hope. You have to pray and have faith. You can't just say "God, let me out of here. I will never do it again." You ask God to lead you the right way, so that when you get out, you won't do it again. Because livin' in the fast life is going to get you in jail or dead. Just like my cousin, Greedy. I really respect him, but that's the way it is.

Just let God handle it. Every time you get in trouble, just tell the person, "What goes around comes around. Have faith in yourself, because if I can do it, you can do it." What's up, Sneezie?

-Chunky

From The Beat: When your friend Jay-Jay was murdered and you were in Juvy and couldn't help him or even go to his funeral, did it help you to pray to God? When you're on the outs and get tempted to do whatever, do you hear a voice trying to warn you not to do what you're about to do? Do you ever listen to that voice? What happens if you do? What happens when you don't?

The 'Hood Is Better

I think the 'hood is better than being fitted. Being in a safe place is better than having nice clothes. Being in a nice place can save you more money than riding on chrome or getting the newest shoes. Plast, rubber and leather cost \$100 or \$200, when you can get a new radio or chair.

-Juan

From The Beat: Is the neighborhood you live in dangerous? If so, in what way? What do you have to do to avoid the danger? Is there anything you can do to make your area safer? How do you help protect your mom, others in your family? How is your family managing without you?

tv stays ON 24/7

I really love TV. I couldn't see myself without it, like when you get high—that shhh, it hella funny. I like to watch Sponge-Boob and at my house the TV stays on 24/7 hours. It makes me laugh!

-Chunky

From The Beat: How are you managing with the TV shows that you love? What have you learned from TV that you consider valuable? Would you rather read or watch TV? What do you like to read? Do you read anything that makes you laugh?

My Heart Started To Get Into A Stone

I was born and my heart was soft. After years passed by, I started to meet people that were messed up to me. My heart started to get into a stone. Tell me if you've been like that.

-Shorty

From The Beat: Will you let a few bad experiences with people stop you from opening your heart again? There are some really good people out there.

World of Confusion

Drifting off into a world of confusion
Wondering if I'll ever see him again
Thinking about you sitting in the Sonoma Halls
We met only two times, but clicked
Te extrano con todo mi corazon

-Guera

From The Beat: We're so sorry you're back inside. If you can maintain your freedom, maybe you two can be together.

**Every time you
get in trouble,
just tell the
person, "What
goes around
comes around."**

tears swirling Amid Lidless eyes

Tears swirling amid lidless eyes
Drops caught in struggles
Will lead to my demise
They spill over

And stain the ivory-glass skin
With blue-black inkiness
Pouring out from within

-The Antichrist

From The Beat: Another amazing poem! Your image of blue-black tears reminds us of your drawings of yourself with blue-black ink tears. We wish we knew more about why you're so sad. Do you have friends at home? What do y'all do for fun? Have you made friends in Juvy? When you get out, how will your life be different from when you came in?

Especially From Love

Emotional pain is worse than physical pain, 'cause people throughout your life will always beat you physically, but the bleeding and bruises will go away. The emotional pain will never go away, especially from love.

-Erika

From The Beat: There may nothing as painful as heartbreak, Erika. It's even worse than physical pain, because you're not bleeding and no one can really appreciate what you're going through. It's like being as raw as a newborn baby. You sound like you already know that.

**It's hard when
you lose a very
close friend and
you have no one
to talk to**



strugglin' to survive

The pain and struggle I feel every day
Asking God, "Please forgive me and wash my sins away.
Moms cryin' and worryin' about me
Thinkin' her baby boy is going to be in jail or end up dead in the
streets. But I do my own thang and, no, I did not listen
That's why I'm in a cell, still reminisin'.
I strive to survive in this world of pain, on da grind
Tellin' my potnas, "Let's do the damn thang.
I need help from a higher power.
Times get hard when you makin' \$6.75 an hour.
I'm a smart person, just can't see my way out.
Getting my grind on, my shine on. Gettin' over.
Our people selling a ten and gettin' twenty.
I need nobody else — money, I got plenty.

-Chunky

From The Beat: How does God enrich your life? Do you follow any or all of his teachings? Does being a believer make you treat your life and other people differently? Why or why not?

A day in Marin county juvenile Hall

We wake up at 7:30, sweep and mop out our rooms,
then we go to breakfast,
Then we line up and come back from the dining hall.
Then we do med call.
Then we go to school from 9:00 to 10:45.
Then we do rec for fifteen minutes
Then we go to PE at 11:00.
Then we come back inside, put on our shoes.
Then we go back to the dining hall, eat lunch, chill after lunch for an hour
Then we go back to school for an hour.
Then we go down to our rooms for shift-change, 'til 3:30, then showers. The dinner is at 4:
30. We eat; go back to our rooms for another shift change, then we come back out at 7:00.
Level 7 stays out to 8:30. Level 2, 9:30.
Then we get to go back to our rooms,
Then read a book and go to sleep and the same thing happens the next day and we are
basically out of our rooms all day.

-Chunky

From The Beat: What do you think about your daily routine, Chunky? How does it compare with your day on the outs? What would you be doing if you were home? Why aren't you home instead of in Juvy?

Chunky's Food Alphabet

A: apple, apricot
B: butter, banana, blue cheese, beans
C: cauliflower
D: doughnuts
E: eggs
F: French fries
G: garlic
H: hot dogs
I: ice cream
J: jello
K: kiwi, kettle corn
L: lemons
M: melons
N: nuts
O: oranges
P: potatoes
Q: cracker
R: raspberries
S: sausages
T: tamales
U:
V: Value Meal
W: watermelon
X: x-rated
Y: yogurt
Z: zebra legs
This is why they call me Chunky! Because I really like to eat.

-Chunky

From The Beat: What are your favorite foods? If you could order up your favorite dinner, home-cooked, what would you choose? Can you cook? What are your specialties?

She Is My Mama

Yo, I wish I could see my mom again. She would always make me happy when I was sad. She always had touched me and I knew she loved me and I wish I could see her, because I always will love her for who she is. She is my mama.

-Jason

From The Beat: Your mom must miss you as much as you miss her, Jason. Does she come and visit you? Maybe she can help you during your incarceration in Juvy. How will you make sure, that when you get out, you won't go back inside? Good luck to you!

**I always will
love her for
who she is.
SHE IS MY
MAMA.**

My Black People

Poverty
Issues
Evil
Hard times
Problems
Help
Crossroads
Drugs
Money
Smart
Chip
Shinin'
All the problems we have
And go through
We still stand tall
Hope
For
Nelson
Mandela

-Chunky

From The Beat: What have your people gone through that you can relate to the most? What have you felt the most? It seems like with a mind like yours, which is amazingly curious and absorbent, that you could go either way. You could become the thug you sometimes write about. Or you might become the leader who really helps his community in the fearless way he writes. Which would you choose?

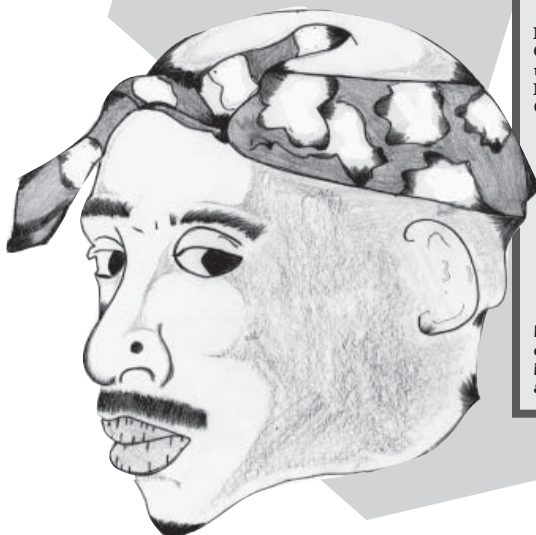
Chunky, Lil' E, KG, And Black Jack, Just Talkin'

Black Jack: What's up with you, Chunk?
Chunky: Man, I cool. Just chillin'. You know I'm leavin' April second. I hope they don't April Fools me. What up with you?
Black Jack: That would be hella messed up if they did April Fools you, but it's cool!
Chunky: Man, you need to change your ways and stop gangbanging.
Black Jack: Man, why you keep sayin' that I plan to live thugged out 'til I die?
Chunky: Well, me, I plan to stop all my old ways, because you know when you get eighteen, you goin' straight to the pen and they say it's harder than the streets!
Lil' E: Man, I ain't trippin' off prison. Lock me up, throw away the key!
Black Jack: You nasty E, ya need a girl in ya life, so I hope you do get out on the sixth. KG, you hear this, ninja?
Chunky: Man, it's too many ghetto girls who will talk to you. Maybe even a wifey!
KG: Man, let's change the subject. But, E, you fruity, so Eli, I heard you were getting out Tuesday. Ha ha ha ha ha wool LOL. (Laughing Out Loud.)
Lil' E: You laughin' now, but when I get out holla at me. The end.

-Chunky, Lil' E, Kg and Black Jack

From The Beat: You guys are hilarious! We hope none of you gets April Fooled! Good luck on the outs! Lil' E, trust us, you don't want to go to prison! Read some of our Beat Without prison writings in the back of The Beat Within. They'll tell you how prison ain't da place to be. Aim higher. If you aim high, you will achieve higher.

**read a book and go to sleep and
the same thing happens
the next day**





Weekly Writings

Maricopa, Durango

Volume 9.14

Page 71

Is It Really Love?

So many young people are blinded by feelings. Emotions are very tricky. Young people are not well developed to know what love is.

For instance I'll use my life as an example. I was fifteen years old and living a good teenage life. Going to school and having a food time with my sister and friends. Just basically going out having decent fun without drugs, alcohol, or sex. Just fun.

Well I met one of my sister's friends and immediately was attracted to him, even though it took him a couple weeks to loosen up to me. And as he did we began to start dating. We dated for two weeks before I broke up with him. And eventually we got back together.

The thing was me and him was, it was perfect. He told me he loved me and I said it back to him and meant it. We went through a lot together. I lost my virginity to him and he lost his to me. And eventually I got pregnant. We never used condoms. The way we looked at it was if I'm your girl and you my man then why should we use condoms? It's not like we were cheating on each other.

Well, I had a miscarriage and that's when things started to get complicated. We were still good together it was just mainly my moms trippin' out on us. So we went to Mexico and got married. He got me an engagement ring and his mother gave me her wedding ring. I thought we would be together forever. But eventually my mom got tired and we moved to Alabama. I stayed out there for six months and was still talking to him. But when I got back I found out he cheated on me.

What was going on? The person who I was supposed to spend my life with left. But the love was gone and I realized that it wasn't really love.

You told me you loved me, said you'll always be there.
You said that you loved me, you'll never leave 'cuz you cared
You vowed your love to me
You said you'll never cheat
But even though you said you was being faithful
I was being doubtful because I knew you was
Incapable of being truthful.
But I still stuck around, planted my feet
In the ground. Nobody was changing my mind
about you. Even though I knew the things you do.
All the gangs, the violence, the drugs, the sex—
I wasn't affiliated with it before, but look at all I missed.

-Betsy

From The Beat: Love can be so complicated at times — we think everybody in the world would agree with that. But do you think it's better to have loved and lost than to have never loved at all? What's your reasoning behind whatever choice you've made? Have you ever thought about the stereotypes placed on women who cheat? What about the stereotypes placed on men? Do you think these stereotypes have something to do with the promiscuity? What will you do differently the next time love comes around?

i WANNA go HOME

I feel so alone
But my mom thinks I don't
So much anger
I wanna grab someone's throat
And start to choke,
But then again I'm sad
'Cause I lost the only home I had
Hurt my mom and made her mad
I'm lost in a desert of sand
Don't know where to go
Maybe my tia could give me home
But no.
I must apologize
Look into my mama's eyes
And sympathize
Start to realize
That I'm messing up both our lives.
Being in here is a lot of time
To rewind
To the time
I could have changed my mind.
But that self control I just couldn't find
But all in all
I know I learned a lesson
Don't yell at your mom
When you know she's freakin' stressin'

-Randy

From The Beat: We're very happy to hear the lesson you learned. We also hope that many more young people in a similar situation can learn that very same lesson. Do you appreciate your mother more now that you are locked up? Do you feel like there are things you need to say to her that you've never said before? If you could pour your heart out to your mother, what would be your exact words? Would you apologize?

Questions

Is there a heaven
And is there a hell?
Will I succeed
Or will I fail?
Will I live
To play another game
Or will I slumber
And fill with shame?
Will I live free
Without these chains
Or will I be apathetic
And stay the same?
Will I do drugs
Or will I take charge
Or will I be successful
Without any bars?

-Ramon

From The Beat: Those are all really good questions to ask. Yet it also seems like the answers to those questions are things that only you have. Have you found any answers to those questions? Has anybody ever given you any good advice or suggestions? We hope you'll find what you're searching for. We hope certain experiences can open a few doors.

It's Hard Living Ghetto Life

Knowing everywhere you go you have to live a fight you have to use your mind and think from wrong and right before you do the crime why don't you just think twice now you're locked up in a cell and you wonder why when your momma comes to visit and she starts to cry

lie
you gonna quit jackin' and stop getting high
when you're on the outs you think you're gonna die
and I tell you that it's hard living a ghetto life

-Micio

From The Beat: Are you living a ghetto life? What is so attractive about this lifestyle? Why do you think so many people are stuck in this way of living? If there was another way, do you think people would go that route? What can our society do solve this problem?

Valentine's Day

I wish I could just see my girlfriend instead of seeing males in here. Last year I had a good Valentine's Day with my girlfriend, but this year I was here in Durango thinking about her.

She had told me that she was crying about me because she didn't see me on Valentine's Day. She had told me

it's okay that I didn't see her on Valentine's Day, if you spent Valentine's Day in here it's okay because you will spend Valentine's Day with your girlfriend or your family next year.

-Ducky

From The Beat: It's amazing how we don't realize what we have until it's taken away from us. What if you could never spend another Valentine's Day as a free person again? How would you feel? There are a number of people who will never spend a free day with their girlfriends again. What would you say to these people?

Pain And Struggle

Pain and struggle
Tears and scars
People that hate you
For who you are
Memories of bad times
That you don't want
Because these memories
They begin to haunt
Images of the past
Will always stay with you
They'll always be there
Because they can teach you
Not from the past
But only for the future
Learn from your choices
Let them be your tutor
No matter what had been told
Or thrown in your direction
Look inside yourself
And go in your own direction

-Ramon

From The Beat: Those are some wise words we hope everybody hears. Maybe you've been the hand that catches another person's tears. Do you take heed to your own advice? Is it harder to speak words of wisdom than it is to do what's right? Through all the struggles and all the pain we still read words that come from a youngster that's ready to make a change.

The person who I was supposed to spend my life with left.

A Day To Live

What's up?
My name is Ramon
I'm from Arizona.
If I had twenty four hours to live,
I would spend ten hours
With my family.
Then I'd pull my mom
In the room and spend
ten hours with my mom talking.
The last four hours I'd spend
Wit' my daughter
And my girlfriend, Christina

-Ramon

From The Beat: We've asked this question a number of times, but never have we got an answer that was so powerful, yet so simple. What exactly would you do with your family during those ten hours? What would you like to tell your mother for the other ten hours? And finally, what would you tell your daughter and girlfriend during those last four hours?

Guns

What is the reason of having a gun?
So that you could go out and have some fun
You pull out the strap and they start to run
And why do you think your day will come
You're telling your homies it's time to jack
Then all of a sudden you're on your back
You think in your mind what you gonna do
You look at your homies while they look at you
You think in your mind and look at the sun
What is the reason for having a gun?

-Micio

From The Beat: You pose a question that many think they have the answer to, but if we all looked at this question as deep as you did, we'd probably come to the conclusion that there is really no reason to have a gun. How could we pass this message on to others? What do you think needs to happen before everybody realizes this? What about those who say they need their gun to "protect themselves"?



Crime

Crime is what I do all the time
When I am out there selling nickels and dimes
Crime is always happening when I turn
Left and right
But then I tell myself that ain't right
Crime is doing time
But now it's just a waste of my time
So don't commit a crime
Because you will be facing jail time.

-Jesus

From The Beat: It seems as if you've become very wise. What do you want people to see when they look into your eyes? Did it have to take jail time for you to realize that the crime wasn't right?

Should The State Kill?

Well, truthfully I don't think the state should kill. But in some situations I think they should.

Now I watched this prison movie in one of the classes I had in jail. Two white men murdered this black man for no known reason then tied him up. One man sat on him and held him down while the other man stabbed him seventeen times. Now I think he should get death because when they ask him why he stabbed him so many times and if he felt sorry, his answer was that he kept moving. If someone's stabbing you of course you're gonna move, you're not gonna just lie there.

I mean when people kill out of racism that makes me so angry, if you're a threat to the people in life, but other than that you'll die when God ready for you to go.

-Nicole

From The Beat: Regardless of what mistakes an individual has made, do you think it's right for our society to teach us to stop violence by murdering a human being? Is there really any justification for killing somebody? If we kill, aren't we just as insane as the man we're killing?

Love

Love is a powerful word to me
When I have my lady next to me
The butterflies she gives me when she hugs me
When her eyes connect with mine
She hypnotizes my mind, with those beautiful
Lips, and face like a angel, being there through
Hard, and good times I realize what God has
given me a feelin' that no one can give you,
except for my beautiful lady waiting for me out there and me locked up,
but there is still love,
strong love I just can't wait to be with my hermosa again,
to my lady

-Jose

From The Beat: We are inspired by the beautiful experience you were able to be involved in. Is this girl enough incentive for you to do the right thing? Will she be enough motivation for you to get out and stay out? What's the most romantic thing you've done for your girlfriend? We hope you can keep this memory with you as you journey through life's obstacles.

The Lowest Part Of My Life

When I was living on the streets I was a totally different person. I was a product of the G-funk. I vowed to myself I would never sell my body for drugs or money. But I needed food. It was just me against the world. You know I remember sleeping in vacant apts.

I felt like a shell with no feelings, miserable. Then I asked myself is this the way I want to live my life — hungry, roaming the street? I was stripped of my dignity, my very life and spirit. Hunting for a bowl, for some bread and a home, but most importantly love. But when I came here I realized I am loved unconditionally. I just had to look inside my heart and it was there all along the best ever lasting love in the whole world, the love of Jesus Christ.

Tell me which one of your homies were with you when you busted that mala (bad girl) and came face to face with death? Who was there when you walked down that dark street and threw up your 'hood and escaped five guys, who was there with you that saved your life and had your back? Not your homies, boyfriends (they're all dogs) — Jesus Christ. He saved my life and soul.

He's knocking on your heart now, will you let him in?

-Alize

From The Beat: We've come across so many people who find God while incarcerated, and we are extremely happy to know that youngsters are finding something positive to motivate them in this cruel world. However, a lot of times people find God while incarcerated and then get out and do the same things they were doing when they went in. How will you keep Jesus in your life when you get out? Do you pray every night? What would you say to somebody who didn't believe in God?

Marijuana

Pot, bud, weed, whatever you call it
believe me it ruins your life.
I have always thought that a little weed will let your mind free
but now I see it has ruined me.
It has taken my freedom from me.
I started smokin' to take my stress awa
and now I smoke to feel straight minded everyday.
Now I'm in and out of Durango and I got to say
smokin' weed has got me nowhere
but high in the clouds and down on my luck.
I did what I had to do to get that extra buck.
I never thought getting high would bring me so far down
from honor roll student to being a straight clown.
In the streets of Phoenix it's easy to get caught slippin'
cops constantly trippin'
now as I see this life of drugs (yes weed is a drug) is not for me
I now see how addiction has truly captured me.

-Dirt

From The Beat: You bring up a very good point. So many people justify marijuana use because it's more socially acceptable than some other drugs. However, weed is an addictive drug and folks need to understand that. Do you give credit to incarceration for helping you kick this habit? Why or why not?

Your First Love

There's nothing like a lady
After the years you call each other baby
When you've known her from a young age
And after awhile you become engaged
And when someday
You have kids; they have your same face
But you too young to be like that
But you love it when you and her kick back
She's your one and only girl
She's worth more than the whole wide world
She has a great fashion
And being with her is your only passion

-Betty

From The Beat: Have you ever experienced such a love? Have you ever met a person who became the center of everything you were thinking of? How did it feel? Was it an experience that didn't seem real? Is love the same for you now as it was then? Who would be the ideal person to influence you in loving again?

A Love Story

Man I was six, at my first school. This chick named Tiffany. I guess you can say puppy love. For fourth grade I changed schools. Sometimes I wish I didn't.

Now I'm fifteen and I haven't seen her since. She would wait for me when I was in time out. Some people may think that's gay or stupid. I bet you can remember three or four chicks at least that didn't wait for you. Why did I change schools?

-Matt

From The Beat: We are amazed at how mature you were at the age of six. Most of us didn't start falling in love until our teenage years, and even then we called it 'puppy love'. Has your interaction with this young girl influenced how you treat girls today? How?

He's knocking on your heart now, will you let him in?

Baby Girl

Baby girl, you stay on my mind.
You make my every wish
And dream come true.
Baby girl, you make me happy.
You make me sad.
You make me very, very glad.
Baby girl, to be with you,
You're all I have.
I love you.

-Ramon

From The Beat: You left us wondering what it is about this girl that caused you to believe that she's all you have. So, what is it? We hope your love for each other lasts long.

WHY i'M Locked up

Well, really there are two reasons, but the main one is I hate the word no.

I hate being told no, and that's one of my biggest problems. I want things my way; I've always had things my way and I don't understand why that should change. If I don't get my way I'll do whatever I can till I do.

If my moms tell me no you can't do this I'll ask why, then I'll talk her out of her reason. It works a lot anyway, I'll wait 'til she goes to work, ditch school or sneak out at like two in the morning.

If I want something I don't care how I get it. That leads to my next reason I'm locked up — shoplifting. But now I'm gonna have to learn how to accept that word. If I don't then jail will be my life, and I don't want that. In jail you miss out on a lot.

-Nicole

From The Beat: It means a lot to recognize your faults in hopes of changing them. Not a lot of people can even do that. How have you learned to accept the word no and still be able to function? Do you still get angry when people tell you what to do? It must be hard to have that sort of attitude where you are. How has it been a problem in your particular environment? How has it helped?

I hate being told no, and that's one of my biggest problems.



first Love

I get an unexplainable feeling when true love crosses my mind

The fact that there is someone like you
A "lady" that would never leave me behind
Through good and bad, never left me sad
Loyal to the fullest, when it was time to ride
You always said, "Let's do this"

Your nickname's got style

I love everything about you 'specially your smile
It hurts me to think I won't be around for a while

A beautiful lil' gift is what you gave me,

For that my affection is yours,

sorry for ever hurting you but just know you're my first and only L-O-V-E.

-Chris

From The Beat: We appreciate a sweet poem to a lover at any time of the day. And this poem is the sweetest we've heard in a while. Do you think you'll ever love a girl like you loved this one? What was the most memorable experience you had with this girl?

Love For My Family

I love all my family and friends at home. I imagine if something happened to my family while I am in here I will go crazy. In here I need to be with my family, and show my brother a better example 'cuz I never want to see him in here in Durango.

I pray to God every day and tell Him why am I going thru this. It's very hard to wake up and to the same thing every day — eat the same food and get orders from other people — but that's life, you need to learn from your mistake, and be positive in the future and be someone.

Home is the best place for me because my family is always there for me and love me works hard just to put food in my stomach. I get along real good with my sisters and brothers. We are all real close, we always talk to each other about our little fights like any normal family but in a couple of minutes we say sorry to each other 'cause that's how my mom and dad taught us how to be. I love my dog, it's a pit bull. He real mean and strong but to me he is real nice.

I miss a lot of things, that's why I need to stay out of here and do something for me in the future before I go do something stupid and go to prison. I miss my friends and my girlfriend a lot.

-Ricardo

From The Beat: It's great that you realize the importance of family. Are they enough to keep you from doing the things you did before you went into Durango? Will they be motivation enough to steer you away from a life of crime? How has your family played a role in assisting you through your incarceration? Should it take jail time for us to show gratitude to those who take care of us?

getting shot

One day a boy was walking down the street. He was going to the park to go chill with some of his homeboys, when some gangbangers started chasing him in their car. When they got him cornered they started shooting him. They shot him a few times, one in the shoulder and a couple on his legs.

Now he sits on a wheelchair the rest of his days. He is paralyzed from the waist down. All because he had started some drama with some of the gang members from that gang. So don't be like my cousin, don't get involved wit' gangs because you might end up getting shot.

-Edgar

From The Beat: Have you ever come across someone who shot somebody? Did you tell this person the story about what your cousin went through? Are you planning to say something to those who shoot, and not just to those who are getting shot? What would you say to a man who shot somebody?

Running Through My Brain

I'm so sick of always
Having drugs running
Through my brain
That glass pipe with
A sack of G by its
Side it makes me
Crazy cause I want
To change but all
I know is that
High I feel like
I'm going to die
I loved watching
The smoke, staying
Up for days. That
Smell was great
Stop running through
My brain I want
To be clean and live
A sober life. Where
I can feel control
And live for
Everything instead of
Living for that pipe
And that sack of G
Every night.

-Kassie

From The Beat: You really painted us a picture of how hard it is for a person to stop using drugs. When drugs are running through your brain, what thoughts allow you to focus on something else? How have you stayed strong throughout your recovery? We admire your ability to stay positive through these hard times.

reality

Sex, love, rape,
Manipulations and games
Sluts, whores, and pimps
Making money and pain
Meth, crack, and coke
Your drug of choice is sane
But each one of
These things make you
The person you
Are today.

-Kassie

From The Beat: We don't deny the truth in your poem. But we are wondering what makes you the person you are today? How does writing help you in dealing with all the pressures listed in your piece?

the good old days

My nights are long
Days are cold
Sorrow and pity
Pain and woe
Drugs and hate
Can you relate?
Is death my fate?
Crystal meth
Skinny and sick
I thought I was cool
Smoking that glass stick
But come to find out
It only made me sick
Throwing up, up all night
I forgot who I was and what
I wanted to be
Fell flat on my face
Feel like a disgrace
Now I picked myself up
Now I'm in God's embrace.

-Sweets

From The Beat: You have some very wise words and they were so eloquently put together in your poem. What would you say to the next generation of meth users? How would you use your own experience with the drug to try to convince others not to use it? Thank you for this beautifully written piece.

Home is the best place for me because my family is always there for me and love me

Rest In Peace

I wish I could just bring my cousin back from his death, because my family misses him now. People tell me don't worry because he died in front of you. He died because his mom didn't care about him, his mom only cared about her men.

My cousin was mad and he had called all of his homies and homegirls, he died before his homies and homegirls got there. He died by killing himself with a nine millimeter on his hand. People that were his family members, homies and homegirls were crying because what he did to himself.

I always pray that my cousin comes back from heaven. Rest in peace Bobby.

-Ducky

From The Beat: Our hearts go out to Bobby. It's always sad to hear that one of our youth leaves us due to the pressures of life. Why would you want to disrupt the good time he's having up there by bringing him back? Do you ever feel like you'll see him again? Does he visit you in your dreams? How does that make you feel? We know losing someone is an unwanted experience, but we also know that death is a part of life, and all of us will go some day. But until then, it's only foolish not to live each day like it's our last.

On My Mind

As the minutes pass by
And the hours disappear
There's a feeling in my heart
To help me face my fear
While I listen to the judge
Slam the gavel on the table
Stuck waiting for transfer
Got my familia on the
Outs
Waiting till I get out
But when I do
I'm gonna get straight
And get decked out real coo'
And get back to school

-Shorty

From The Beat: How close are you to graduating? Do you plan on going to college? If so, what college would you like to go to? Do you appreciate your family more now that you are incarcerated? How will you be able to show your appreciation when you get out?

Now he sits on a wheelchair the rest of his days. He is paralyzed from the waist down.



From The Beat: The following writing comes from Ida B. Wells High School in San Francisco, California. The teenagers there were great and enjoyed our program and had a lot of questions and just a lot to say in general. We hope to see them again and we hope that they never stop writing! Enjoy the writing, readers! Thanks for having us!

When I Think Of You

When I think of you is when I sit in my room doing nothing and your face flashes in my head, and I think about all the wonderful moments we had. Because whenever I was with you, I felt that nothing could fall apart, and I never stopped to think about what people thought.

-Beatrice

break ups

It all started Feb. 13, 2004 I was in my living room at my house and I just came back from downtown buying my mom and boyfriend something for Valentine's Day, and I told him to come and get it. He came and I gave it to him and he didn't say thank you or nothing, so I just let that little stuff go.

So I finished braiding my cousin's hair and we got dressed and went to a party. I got some new numbers so I wasn't tripping. So afterwards we was rolling downtown and I saw him with a girl and another boy. The reason I did not jump out and beat her behind, is because there was another man standin' there.

-Baby Gurl

inside me

For me, being a Latina girl and born in Mexico then coming to UC was hard for me. It's not easy for me 'cause people try to put me down, but my father taught me different — better. I was raised to be proud of who I am and no matter what people say.

Now I am the only one who could change it. It's myself. I'm proud of my culture, from where I came from no matter where I'm from, in my blood I'm Latina even though I wasn't raised in my culture. I still have my culture inside me.

-Beatrice

the truth that lies between us

I sit here and think to myself on how blind I was to think I was in love with you. I thought that without you here by my side, I wouldn't be able to live. But I see that it wasn't love, it was just an addiction, a habit of having you here with me.

I was used to putting up with all the shhh you did and sat on the sideline taking it in. I was used to putting up with all the games you played and took it day by day. But now it's time for me to say that I'm not in love with you and thank you for showing me the true you.

So I sit here and think to my self on how blind I was to think that at one point in time — I thought I was in love with you.

-Marta

About My Man And My Voice

The thing that will make me famous is my voice. I love to sing. I sing to uplift people spirits and their day. Singing is the main thing in my life besides my man.

The kind of music I like is R&B. My favorite singer is Kelly Price. What I like in my man is how he treats me. He don't disrespect me by calling me names. He treats me like a woman is suppose to be treated.

We been together for almost a year. Our best time together is when we first met. On my birthday he bought me a dozen roses and a box of chocolates and took me out to Black Angus to eat.

-Baby Gurl

Untitled

So what, you thought you was gon' play me?
Never that boo, remember it was you, who said that we two,

Could not be, and that we were through.
But now it's the same face, in this same space,
In my ear, spitting words of change,

When really you ain't changed.
I can't help but to laugh,
When I think about the past,

And how you would do me wrong, but our love did last.

And now 2 years after the fact,

You've been tryin' and tryin' to come back,

But that Just ain't me.

And this time to say, 'okay baby boy one last chance'.

Is like me telling you, it's okay to run game, it's okay to hurt me
It's okay for you to do those things 'cause I'll remain true,

To you.

I love you, I do

Just not like I use to.

But swear it's the truth, I just can't go through

The lies and deceit, the cries when you cheat.

I don't want to, I don't want to.

I mean, don't get me wrong,

I've cared all along.

I just don't see that it's there and to me that's not fair.

I mean really I care, I just can't hold on.

I do want you, and I do trust you,

I just can't feel that I am still,

In love with you.

Forever In Love...

-Sophia

All along I thought I was the main course and the whole time I WAS JUST A SIDE DISH.

music

I don't believe lyrics in any song can effect anyone. Personally, I think it depends on what kind of person you are and how you take it.

If you don't understand different lingo then it's easy to get misguided.

-Music Man

Big Bro Capone

My ninja Pone been gone three years now.

Ninja and hatas on they chedda,

And them ninjas thought they could teach us better.

But them ninjas don't know 'bout me

I'm the hardest ninja steppin' out the 'hood

The way it made me feel

I cried and cried 'cause them ninjas took my pride.

Them ninjas got my brother laying 6 feet under.

And now I wonder,

Why the hell them ninjas got my bro

Stuck in the ground.

-Lil' Pone

Father

As I was growing up he told me I was the most important person in his life. He told me I was the only person that he loved. Coming up, I believed those words. It don't make sense for someone to sell a dream to a little girl like that. I try to block it out and I hate to bring it up.

All along I thought I was the main course and the whole time I was just a side dish. I see it as when it comes to love there are only three things that can happen: 1) You can play along, 2) you can play a fool, 3) or you can pay a price.

The ninja that halfway made me, made me pay the price as a little girl, I played a fool. Right now I refuse to play along. He put a stranger before his child. He put the plate before his child. He put the bottle before his child. He put himself before his child. The only thing he didn't put before his child was a 22 and no one ever knew what happened next.

Thank the Lord. I'm not part of the menu anymore. Until I open my own restaurant. To be continued....

-Ynez

The Hardest Thing

The hardest thing in my life I don't think is my family. Actually, I think my family is very understanding of me. My dad is really an open person to us young people. He always talks about, "I know what you like doing with your friends." My mother is really old fashion. She don't understand how I am with others but she still understands me.

It's really hard seeing how police officers treat my friends. They're always arresting them without them doing something, then they get shot. I always see them running in drugs, but I still stand tall in front of them because I don't let anybody influence me but me. I'm proud of who I am.

-Beatrice





From The Beat: A few weeks ago we had the privilege of visiting and facilitating a Beat Within workshop with the youth housed at Thunder Road, a live in treatment center for young women and men in Oakland. The following pieces were their contributions to The Beat on the topics of "What does it take to be a man/woman?" and on a lighter note, how they related to certain creatures in nature. The first topic won the popularity test by far, and we were really inspired by the quality responses we got from these young folks whom have had to endure some difficult things in life. We hope they all really strive to become the person they have described in their writings. Special thanks go out to the staff and the youth at Thunder Road for welcoming us so warmly and respectfully into their worlds and lives. We look forward to working with them again in the future.

Being A Man

Am I a man? A question that often goes through males' minds. This label also comes with a lot of responsibilities. Most males our age struggle to get to this point by getting detoured by institutions.

When I think of becoming a man, I think of myself being able to take care of my child, support myself, and somehow help my mom. I also think it has to do with behavior.

-Joshua

Becoming A Man In This Society

Becoming a man in a society where there's guns, drugs, cops, the system, drama, etc., can be difficult if that male has a weak heart and weak mind. The man needs to come out of the struggle and the mind state of not caring. Man needs to reach into the world and help the needy, fight the system with a strong heart and strong mind in a positive way, fighting the disease, which is negativity.

Becoming a man in this society is being independent, giving back to our communities, not attacking our communities. Loving our kids, wife, and parents having knowledge to feed this society, which is going down the drain.

Becoming a man is being yourself and speaking the truth with realness, having responsibility.

Peace cannot be kept by force; it can only be kept by understanding.

-Naweed

My Life

I'm from Stockton, CA. Well, I had a hard life. I grew up with a single parent, a mother. She tried to help me the best she could, but I felt different from all the other kids. My mom was on welfare for about 10 years.

My dad was never there. He and my mom split up when I was about five years old. He never came to see me. When my mom gave my dad the address and phone number, he just did not want to come and see or call me.

When my mom got a job, we started to get more clothes. I started to steal stuff and did a lot of drugs. I went to the Hall a couple of times, then I came here to Thunder Road.

So I'm just here to handle what I got to handle, like to go home with my mom. To stay away from my old using friends so when I do get to go home, I will change and can change. I'm glad that I can talk to my mom better than ever before.

-Thomas

A MAN

A man, the description of a man is a person who doesn't just think about how they're going to get their high, but how they're going to keep themselves from ending up in the system.

How you do that is have a job, get a place and settle down and don't just lean on yourself, have that love that keeps you wondering all day how she is. That is my explanation on how to be a real man.

-Shon

What It Takes To Be A Man

It takes courage and responsibility. It takes work and stages because you be a baby, a pre-teen, and then a young man. So to go through all those stages you have to accomplish some maturity. So say you have a baby at 18 years old and you out there on the streets selling dope, and you just spending money, messing it all up on whatever and you wonderin', I got a baby, a little boy or a little girl.

So all them stages that you went through, you did not use them properly. You just made a wrong decision by selling dope and you come to the conclusion that you want to become a man and want to support your son or daughter. You want to get a real job, take care of the child you about to have. Then you already got some maturity because you're already making the decision to take care of your child. That's what it takes to be a man.

-Tommy

To Be A Man

It takes a lot to be a man. It's not just when you turn eighteen. You got to take responsibility for your own actions; you got to be honest; you don't become a man by lying your way through life.

You need to accept whatever punishment you get because men don't complain. Men must admit their faults and figure out ways to improve them, one way is to learn from their mistakes and the ones of others.

Men take care of their kids because it takes a man to raise a man, and this is what a man is.

-Juan

I built a relationship with my mother, and before I came here, I never even had a conversation with her.

Being A Man

What does it take to be man? What I think it takes to be a man is to be honest, true to your word, responsible, wise, strong in your heart and mind, and self-determined to become whatever you want. A man knows what's wrong and right, and has no other influence to do so but his own self. It takes a man to have respect and to give respect to others. People who chose to do the right thing have more respect than the people that do wrong and demand respect for actions that were false and self-degrading.

Learn and think about how you want to get your respect for yourself and how you are going to get it from others. Choose your path of getting respect.

I chose my path on how I want to get my respect and become a man. My decision is to go the right way and do it honestly and not get it by showing how bad I can be and how others give me the respect because of my rep or they fear me. There is a difference between having respect and fear. My opinion is that there are more people who don't understand the meaning between these two feelings. If people understood the meanings, they would have a different perspective on how to have and deserve respect.

When I stop making bad decisions and am self-dependant, and listen to myself before I do others, that's when I'm going to be a man. Face my problems and resolve them and not be stubborn, and to do it myself but ask for help if in need. Nothing can take your manhood but your own self.

being A MAN

It takes a lot to be man, for example, you have to have your mind right, you won't disrespect other people. Just drop your turf, because if they change the street name, then what are you going to do? Nothing, so think about it, just drop it.

-Kilo

to MY boys in da Hall

To my boys in Juvi, keep your heads up. I'm in Thunder Road now and shhh, it's hella cool down here. We get to wear our on shoes and clothes. It's a breeze, do your time and stick to your program like glue, 'cause you know you don't want to be back in the Hall for some stupid shhh. Keep your head up y'all.

-Caos

Being Locked Up

I'm still locked up even though the doors are open. I know if I leave I'll go back to the Hall. Nine to twelve months ain't nothing, but it's still 9-12 months without my baby girl. When I think of her, I start to cry because I miss her so much. Knowing the door's open makes it so much harder not to leave. I've already left once and that 12 hours of freedom I had makes it harder not to leave again.

Every day seems to go slower. Seven months left seems like twelve more months, every second inches slower. Shout out to my homeboy in the Walden House.

-Jacob

Thought I Had It All

Fast cars, big money, fast money, drug money, that's all I knew. Thought I had it all. Didn't nothing go wrong till I ended up behind those four white walls.

County blues, straps shoes, with a small little room, locked door. Man, I was so bored all I hoped for was my release, and when that day came, I got sent to this place called Thunder Road.

My first three months I acted up, did not comply with anything they said until I was going to get kicked out. I knew I didn't want to go back to them four white walls, so I shaped up. I got motivated to do good.

I have something to look forward to when I get out. I'm going to have a good life. All that street fame gonna get you hurt or locked up. I want a good life, I want to get married, see a little me — I mean my baby girl or boy.

-Ben

There is a difference between having respect and fear.

What I'm going through

In this writing I will just write about some of the things I'm going through right now. First of all, I would like to vent a little.

Right now I'm in his little program and I'm a little upset 'cause I really had my hopes on going home. You know what though, I'm not going home. I had and still have fears about how I can make it and handle my business outside. That doesn't make me want to stay though.

I mean, I got a scholarship to go to college and I got a job, and from the start, I just wanted to live with family and pay rent. They won't let me do that from here. They say it's dangerous for me and they want me to have a better chance. I really didn't ask for this help. I would be happy to just move on with my goals. I got a lot of stress also.

My grandmother is in the hospital dying and I'm not getting a chance to go see her. She really means a lot to me and I love her. I'm angry with myself for being here and I am more angry I got my level 3 and I still can't leave to see her.

I got a lot of stuff from being here though. I found a higher power and I got a good plan for my future. I built a relationship with my mother, and before I came here, I never even had a conversation with her. Since I've been here I got a 4.0 in school and I ain't trying to be like I'm better the anyone, but I'm proud of myself and I just really want to be move on with my life.

-Richard

-D



Do You Have What It Takes?

I have what it takes 'cause, if I didn't, then I would have left.
I have what it takes 'cause I ain't doing dope.
I have what it takes 'cause I didn't give up hope.
I have what it takes 'cause now I am strong.
I have what it takes 'cause I can admit now when I'm wrong.
I have what it takes 'cause now I'm going to school.
I have what it takes 'cause when I'm mad I use my tools.
I have what it takes 'cause I'm almost home.
I have what it takes 'cause I'm not alone.
I have what it takes 'cause I have someone that I care about.
I have what it takes 'cause I'm better now.

-Li' Girl

What it takes to be a real woman

You got to be about your business, because if you're not, then you only playing yourself in the end. A real woman shows strength, maturity, and backs down to nobody, feel me?

-Danielle

What It Takes To Be A Woman

A real woman:
A real woman treats others how she would want to be treated.
A real woman:
A real woman takes responsibility for her actions.
A real woman:
A real woman respects herself as well as her temple.
A real woman:
A real woman recognizes her strengths and weaknesses.
A real woman:
A real woman has knowledge.
A real woman knows this is what it takes to be a real woman.

-Jayme

What It Takes To Be A Woman

Slick like a weasel
Seein' and hearin' more than needs to be known
You the ultimate warrior
Fighting the world alone
Having your fear beside you
Helps build your strength up high
But even when it's tough
We're woman and we're allowed to cry
Classy and sexy
We even have cute feet
But just because I ain't got a unit
Don't mean we can't spit a beat
We're more than the dominant male
We win at the important game
We even show it when we're weak
We got the man+wo! in our name
We don't need drugs
No way we need to fiend
We don't gotta get high
Smoking some crystal or green
Some of us are players
Some of us are not
But whether or not
The men break down and buy us the rocks!
A woman is strong
Responsible and mature
We have manners and attitude
Who needs to know more?
We're mysterious
Everyone is trying to figure us out
Just do what we ask
And they'll be nada to argue about
When we walk in the room
Y'all bark like horny dogs
We eat like ladies
And men eat like hogs
We don't need pounds
Ounces or grams
We're the top fizzle
A wo-man

-Amanda

don't wanna do them drugs ANYMORE

Sitting in rehab 'cause I wanted to pop some "E,"
I hate being here, but I know I brought it on me.
Don't wanna do them drugs no more, but they felt so lovely.
Now I'm doing time for the crime, this is chance three,
Ain't wasting my life no longer 'cause I can finally see,
The pills took part of my brain and also my S-P-I-N-E,
Got to wear a brace, I'm messed up and probably get surgery,
I got the picture, this shhh ain't fun, this is hella bootsie,
I'm changing my life, I ain't playing games, I'm growing up fast,
I'm taking this seriously, this just might be my last
Chances don't come this often and I'm eternally grateful,
I'm getting serious about love, honesty, and respect, I'm finally joyful.

-Sponge Joy

Nobody Feels Me

Sometimes I feel like nobody feels me,
locked up in Juvenile Hall, wondering
if my girlfriend's pregnant or not. Staff
not giving me a phone call, not even a
receiving phone call home. Wondering
why the last words from my dad was
"Screw you, you hella stupid, I through,
I'm tired of yo' shhh, I'm moving."
Now here at a rehab where staff say
they care about you but talk behind yo'
back about you like you ain't shhh. So
basically, for 9 to 12 months, I have to
listen to people who don't know anything
about me and respect them even when
they don't respect us.

It's messed up, but to me, it's worth
it because in the end I'll have freedom!

-Victor

**The pills took
part of my brain
and also my
S-P-I-N-E,
Got to wear a
brace, I'm messed
up and probably
get surgery**

fox

My spiritual animal that God had me pick was the fox. The information stated characteristics that I, myself, as well as other people, say they see in me. Those characteristics are making sacrifices for your family, observing other people's actions and seeing situations escalating into problems, and the main thing is being able to become a part of my surroundings. God chose.

-Aaron

What Does It Take To Be A Grown Woman?

Does it take courage?
Does it take honesty?
Does it take respect?
Does it take responsibility?
Does it take love?
Does it take integrity?
Does it take power?
Does it take compassion?
Does it take strength?
Does it take self-dependency?
Or self-motivation?

Being a grown woman is not so much as just being grown. To me, a grown woman is a strong, motivated, orientated individual who respects themselves. And on their own, don't have to ask nobody shhh unless necessary, someone who is caring, loving, giving, and compassionate.

-Amber

reading And Writing

When I get out of here, I plan to go to school and maybe get a job. But it's hard for me because I don't know how to read and write and most jobs you have to know these things. So when I get out, I will probably go back to my old ways but be more smarter about it.

-Josh

**We're mysterious
Everyone is
trying to figure
us out**

dope fiend

Chaos in mind,
Sanity here is hard to find,
Too easily misunderstood,
I've ran too much from my neighborhood,
I've become slain by a game,
Where only dope can reign,
Woodland is where I'm from,
Dope controls our fun,
We do what we need to do to keep our minds' numb,
My brain feels a strain,
I'm losing the feel from where I came.

-Kayla

respect

How I feel about it is that if you want respect, you have to give respect to get it. But me, I like respect because you are treated equal. I like to be equal but some people just don't want to respect you. Maybe because they don't like you or nothing about you.

-Menelik



I Know What It Takes

My name is Darnel and I know what it takes to be a man. I think being a man is taking responsibility for your choices and actions. That does not mean telling on yourself or on another, that means caring about yourself or another. I also think being a man means trying to do good for yourself, not because your mother or father says so, but because you want to and you need to.

When I think of what a man is, I think of someone with a heart and a caring soul — a soul that is good and true, not a coward or a liar. Someone who can take the punishment as it comes and how it is.

And if there is one thing I know, it's that I am a man.

-Darnel

Being A Man: What Does It Take?

What it takes to be a man? When I ask myself this question, I don't really know what to say because I've been a child for so long. But when I think about it, a man is everything but a child.

What it takes to be a man is to be a responsible person, willing to do anything for his family and himself. Knowledge of his wrongs and willing to make a change and an ability to notice his wrongs and has found his direction in life.

-Chase

My Medicine Card

Dog: I have loyalty in common with a dog, and friendship.

-Anthony

goals

My name is Josh. I was born in Merced, CA, on Jan. 30, 1987. I'm an addict but in recovery. I have a few goals in life I would like to tell you about. My #1 goal is to become clean from drugs for the rest of my life; #2, get all of my charges dropped; get my high school diploma; go straight to the military for 20 years, retire before I'm 40, be a drug counselor when I retire from the military.

When I complete my goals, I will for sure be able to support my family — that's all that really matters to me.

-Josh

Taking Responsibility

Being a man means taking responsibility for your own actions, also being mature, and if you got a daughter, like me, and trying to be a man, then you would be taking care of that baby girl or baby boy.

But see, the thing about me is even though I'm at Thunder Road, I consider myself taking care of my baby girl by me taking care of my drug problem here in rehab. It might be a while (9 to 12 months). Actually it's only 9 to 12 months of my whole entire life, so it's going to be a whole lot better for me, my baby momma, and my daughter. But when I get out, I'm going to be a man and not a little boy.

-Alex

I think being a man is the level you get to after learning most of your important life lessons.

untitled

I'm back in the "Road" once again. What the hell was I thinking? Why did I leave? Why did I smoke that dope, do that weed, do the coke, sleep with the people I've slept with, why? Just so I can get high to stop feeling the feelings or maybe 'cause I wanna be back in the system.

I feel so ashamed of everything that I have done. I don't want to end up dead or end up locked up for life just so I can stop feeling.

When will it get through my damn head that I need to stop? I need to stop the self-destruction cycle. I feel that I'm going to end up like my mom, selling my body so I can get high. Sometimes I just want to end it all, say screw it, but I know I can't. I know that I got to live life to the fullest.

My Point Of View On Being A Man

My name is Dashawn and my point of view on being a man is having respect, responsibility, dignity, and honesty.

In order to be a man, you have to accept whatever comes your way, not cry about it. My dad told me that it takes a little girl to stay around and cry about it, but it takes a man to accept it and walk away.

When I grow up and have me a family, I'm going to accept my responsibility. I think if you are a man, you can't go around lying your way through life. And one more thing, it takes a man to raise a man.

-Dashawn

Medicine card

My medicine card was "coyote." Coyote is a trickster; he plays mind games with people. I feel the same way about myself, but no matter how big or how little the trick or mind game was, it always comes back around to me in the end.

Coyote also never learns from his mistakes. When I read this I was discouraged because I felt that this meant I would eventually end up in another position worse than the one I'm in now. It made me feel like whatever I did, and no matter how hard I tried, it would be just another useless effort to self-recovery.

But I still have hope for myself in my recovery, and maybe one day I'll be the one to break the cycle.

-Dani

Being A Man

Taking responsibility for your actions, being a positive role model to younger people, integrity, self-instruction. It takes responsible, positive behavior.

-Anthony

Why so mean

I'm so tired of people always being so mean to each other. I know that people always talk about how you should be nice to everyone, but nobody ever listens. You can tell some group of children/adults it isn't nice to be mean to people, you should treat people the way you want to be treated, but nobody listens.

Realistically, ain't nobody really listening. People hurt people every day, that doesn't even faze people's minds. It happens.

Stop it. It's hard, I know. I've been getting teased my whole life. It hurts. A lot of people think I'm a pussy because when people are mean to me I cry or run away. But you know what, because of that I'm emotionally scarred. And that might never change and that's sad.

So please, think about what you do and say. Think about why you are saying and doing those things.

-Megan

What It Take To Be A Woman

It takes courage.

It takes strength to stand up for what you want.

It takes working hard to get the best outta life.

It takes thinking for yourself.

It takes knowing you're only there for yourself and you are the only one there for you in the end.

It takes going for your goals and achieving them.

It takes all these things, but the only way you can become a grown woman is to believe you can actually do it.

-Christine

It Takes Composure

It takes composure, keeping your head up, not giving up. Taking care of your family with the full responsibility of your own actions. Virtuous. Honesty, with yourself and with others.

My medicine animal was the butterfly: I transform a lot. My name is David. I'm a pothead and I don't have what it takes to be a man.

I will not support negative behavior. I will be positive and support, make things cool. I don't want trouble. I'm here to recover, not to make things worse for others.

-David

I'm Not One

This topic is hard for me to write because of the fact that I'm not one. My whole life I have tried to become one, but I have failed. I never took responsibility for any of my actions.

My father told me one day to always have respect for my elders and others. My whole life my mind has told me you got to give respect to get respect.

-Kony

the medicine cards

Snake: Well, the qualities of my animal were that the snake is a type of animal that usually tries to pressure people away from itself. Usually, it will try to bite and snap at people to move them away so they don't be bothered.

That's how I am sometimes when I'm feeling kind and down and people try to get close to me. I usually push them away and try to do something they won't like so they'll leave me alone. Also, I tend to get angry quick and flash on people and that has pushed a lot of people away from me.

The things good about the snake were it is quick on its feet, very slender and smart about its surroundings. That's something that I have in common with the snake. I'm very fast and know my surroundings, so those are the same things I have qualities tied with the snake.

-Jason

Learning Most Of Your Lessons

I think being a man is the level you get to after learning most of your important life lessons. For me, I think I could almost be there to manhood, but I need to complete what I'm doing right now. I need to graduate this program successfully, graduate high school right after I get out, and then I will be on my way to manhood.

I think that could be the beginning of manhood, but to get all the way there, you, as a male or a boy, or me, as myself, need to be able to take care of yourself and a family if you chose to do that. It also requires honesty and staying truthful to what you do.

-Dylan



Dolor Emosional

Yo creo que todos somos iguales y nos queremos como una familia. A veces tenemos problemas y nos guardamos nuestro rencor y el dolor adentro y nunca nos desahogamos.

From The Beat: *¿Pero por qué no lo dejan salir, porque no desahogarse? Eso es lo mejor, que no, no saben como vivir, a ver dinos y tú como te desahogas?*

Emotional Pain

I believe that we are all equal and we love each other like one big family. At times we have problems and we remember our hatred or our pain inside of us, but the problem is that we never vent out our feelings.

-Samuel B4, SF/YGC

Mi Película Favorita

Mi película favorita es la de Juan Camaney. Me gusta la películas de él porque sus películas hacen reír a la gente. Hacen chistes bien chistosos que dan risa sin querer queriendo.

Una de sus películas trata de que es un señor Gordo, Mandilon que no trabaja, y le gusta que su mujer lo mantenga. Y también tiene muchas otras películas de diferente tipos de comedias, en lo cual en una de esas hace el papel del soldado, que es chistoso también.

Estas son unas de mis películas favoritas, me gustan mucho porque me hacen reír.

From The Beat: *Que bien que te guste divertirse en cosas buenas, para eso se hicieron los gustos y los colores. Verdad que es mejor pasarsela bien en esas cosas en vez de andar haciendo cosas malas que te lleven a perdición.*

Mi Favorite Movie

My favorite movie is one by Juan Camaney. I like his movies because they make people laugh. In his films, there are made up jokes that are very funny even though it seems like they are not trying that hard to make the audience laugh.

One of his films that I like is when he acts like a fat guy that likes to tell people what to do, but does nothing himself, and he also likes his girl to maintain him. Also, he has many other movies about different kinds of comedies. In one of them, he plays the role of a soldier and he's very funny in that one as well. These are just some of my favorite films. I like them a lot because they make me laugh.

-Miguel, Santa Cruz

odio

Odio es algo que se agarra pasando el tiempo. Mientras vas creciendo, vas agarrando odio con las personas que no te caen bien, como los vatos de otras pandillas, y deseas matar a esa persona que habla mucho y que nunca hace nada. Por eso yo le tengo odio a la gente que hablan mucho, que usan su boca para hablar tonterías.

Yo digo que todo lo que tiene que pasar pasará a su debido tiempo. Los amo mucho Raza.

From The Beat: *Desgraciadamente existe este sentimiento tan grande y feo. Esperamos que no te dejes llevar mucho por este odio y termines haciendo algo que no te corresponde. Deja que hablen los habladores, tú sólo haz tu tiempo y deja que todo salga como debe de salir.*

Hate

Hate is something that one feels over time. As you grow, you start accumulating hatred towards those you do not like, for example, the fools from rival gangs, and you get the desire to kill the people that talk a whole lot but never do anything. That's why I hate people who talk too much, that use their mouths to speak nothing but nonsense.

I say that everything that needs to happen will happen in due time. I love you all very much my Latin race.

-Shadow, 150 Crew

No Aproveche el tiempo

Sólo tengo 17 años y mi vida es un desmadre y ese es mi estilo. En el barrio me la pasaba todo el tiempo y ese tiempo lo hubiera usado para hacer cosas diferente como tener un trabajo, y hace feria. Entiendes? Cuando salga del bote, va a ser nomas yo y mi jaina.

Voy a hacer el bien y no más desmadres como antes. Eso queda en el pasado y ahora este tiempo nomas me dedico a mi jaina y a mi jefesita.

From The Beat: *Estas el lo sierto, hubieras hecho maravillas en ese tiempo. En esta vida hay muchas cosas que hacer, el mundo está lleno de muchas sorpresas y cosas buenas. Son ustedes los que se han trompesado hacia el camino incorrecto. Espero que esta vez que salgas que en verdad aproveches el tiempo.*

i didn't take Advantage of the time

I'm only seventeen years old and my life is crazy, but that's my style. I used to spend my time chilling in the 'hood and I could have used that time to do different things like getting myself a job and making money. Do you understand what I'm saying? When I get out of Juvy, it's going to be just my lady and me.

I'm going to do good and no more acting like a fool for me like before. That's going to stay in the past, and now, this time when I get out, I'm going to dedicate myself to my lady and my mother.

-Pelon, 150 Crew

Mi película favorita

Mi película favorita es Sangre Por Sangre. Me gusta porque se trata de prisión y eso es lo que más me gusta ver de las películas. Me gusta también porque hay violencia y me gusta los personajes.

Yo pienso que la violencia es algo que todas las personas usan. Algunas no porque quieren tener paz, pero siempre hay una persona que lo usan.

From The Beat: *Esta bien que te gusten este tipo de película, pero esperamos que no llegues formar parte de las acciones incorrectas que se practican.*

My favorite movie

My favorite movie is "Blood In, Blood Out." I like it because it's about prison life, and that's what I like to see in movies. I also like it because there's violence and I like the actors.

I think that violence is something that everyone uses. Some don't because they want to have peace, but there's always that one person that uses it.

-Anónimo, Santa Cruz

American Me

Mi película favorita es la de American Me. La historia es basada entre una juvenile y una prisión. Todo lo que se ve, es como viven detras de las paredes. Se mira mucha violencia, como controlan la droga y el dinero adentro y afuera de las calles. Y como controlan a los mismos policías.

Me gusta el mensaje que te da a entender como la cárcel no es un lugar bueno para vivir la vida.

From The Beat: *Que interezante, esperamos que no pienses que en la vida real así es de facil, no te imagines que todo es color de rosa, como en las películas.*

American Me

My favorite movie is "American Me." The movie plot is based on a juvenile and a prison. Everything in the movie is how things get done inside of prison walls. There's a lot of violence in the movie and the movie depicts how inmates still control the dope game even when they're inside of prison. Also, the movie showed how inmates had prison guards in check.

I like the message that comes across in the film on how life in prison is not a good way to live life.

-Diego, Santa Cruz

Para Qué Vivo

Todos nacemos para una cosa en este mundo. Eso es explorar el mundo y aprender de nuestros errores porque nadie es perfecto.

Nacemos para reproducirnos para que nuestro nombre no muera en medio del desmadres. También nacemos para proteger a mi familia Mexicana.

From The Beat: *Esta bien que nazcan para proteger a su gente. Todos tenemos una razón de existir, y la tuya es esa misma. ¿Pero cómo protégés a tu familia.*

What I Live For

We're all born for a reason in this world. That reason is to explore the world and learn from our mistakes, because nobody is perfect.

We're born to reproduce so our name will not die because of crazy circumstances. Also, we are born to protect our Mexican family.

-Javier, 150 Crew

El Amor

El amor es algo muy bonito que trae naturaleza como cuando quieres a una persona y lo amas mucho. Después de estar por mucho tiempo con una persona, llegas a quebrar con esa persona es muy dolorosa, pero así es la vida.

Si una se te va, muchas más vienen pero es muy bonito amar a una persona y que esa persona te quiera como tú a ella.

From The Beat: *Que doloroso es perder a alguien después de haber estado con esa persona por mucho tiempo, por eso hay que cuidar lo que es de uno, lo meas importate la vida y el amor de uno.*

Love

Love is something beautiful that comes naturally when you love someone and you love them a lot. After being with someone for an extended period of time, if you break up with that person, it becomes a very painful experience, but that's life.

If a female leaves you, many more might come, but it's very nice to love someone and have that person love you the same right back.

-Shadow

The Beat's 9th Editor's Note Writing Contest

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What have you done in your life that you wish you could do over, and how would you go about doing it over?

OK readers, this week we are featuring a number of pieces from our 9th Editor's Note Writing Contest. Next week we will share the second half, and by issue 9.17 we will announce and rerun the top pieces, which will be voted on by us — the Beat editors and facilitators. If you don't know by now, the following writers answered the following question: "What have you done in your life that you wish you could do over, and how would you go about doing it over?"

Sure, we expect the obvious replies, about not doing the crime that put you in the system, going to school, abiding to your family, probation/parole, gang life, the game etc. Then again, we expect many of you to step up big with details as you share a part of your life, and envision on paper a way of doing or reliving something over. Give us a scenario that will take us into your world. Show us the equation, the pros and cons, to the limited and numerous choices you can come up with, then, take us down a path of your choice and let's see what happens and where you go with it.

Before you dive into the pieces, the cool part is that the top voters of this contest will receive prize money! Our top prize is a \$100 money order for first place. Followed by a \$50 money order for second place, and for third and fourth place, \$25 money orders.

King Yella Alameda County Juvenile Hall i wish to change...

One of the things in my life that I wish to change is my relationship with my father. There are things that I did in the past that have grown us apart to the point where we don't even communicate. We were so close that any time I was somewhere getting into life-threatening danger, he'd call my cell phone or look for me. My dad was the only person I could trust in the world for anything, and the feelings were mutual — until I was old enough to drive illegally. That was at twelve years old.

My dad'll go to jail and leave me with a handful of responsibilities — things like cars, storage bills and a whole lot of other things that I gotta tend to that moms couldn't, because she was an irresponsible alcoholic at the time and my dad couldn't trust her with business that important. It was too much pressure on me. I had to travel around the city checkin' on his cars, sell dope to pay his storage bills, because my mom was on welfare, and that's what my dad was doin' to make a livin' anyway. So he'll just tell me in code words where everything was and I'll get it and continue the cycle. (As you all know, in jail phone calls are recorded, that's the reason for the code words.)

The fact that my mom would steal from me, her own son, didn't make the situation I was forced into any easier for me. I had to watch her like she was a total stranger. Every time my dad'll go to jail, I'll be in the same position — my grades at school will drop, I'll be emotionally depressed and miserable to the point where I'll just give up on everything and run away from it all, kinda like curlin' into an imaginary shell to elude the problems of reality.

Every time I'd mess up he'd seemed not to worry, as if he felt or knew what I was goin' through, and every time he'll put all his trust into me, I'll let him down by running from the situation by getting high and stayin' out, not being at home, waitin' for him to call or doin' what he trusted me to do — take care of business.

I felt I was being punished every time I was put in these predicaments, but was afraid to tell my dad how I felt because I thought that it would loosen our bond, but it did more damage to keep it in. That's why I now practice on expressing my feelings verbally to everybody, because it'll just make matters worse to keep your feelings inside.

I've been doin' a good job of it, too. I used ta' feel that I was responsible for the internal conflicts between my dad and me, until I thought about it for three years in jail and on the outs, and now feel that's it's both of our faults — mostly his, because he'll mess up and put me in a difficult position as young as I was. What else was I to do? I didn't even start puberty at the time.

I still love my dad and I know that he feels the same. We're just too overly prideful to apologize to each other. I wanted to, but now I feel he should be the one apologizing to me. I'll probably step up just to be the better man and apologize one day, if I can find the courage.

**I wish I
would have
listened to
my mom**

**Every
time I'd
mess
up he'd
seemed
not to
worry, as
if he felt
or knew
what I
was goin'
through**

Lil' Chris Juvenile Hall

I Wish I Wasn't

I wish I wasn't so hardheaded; I wish I would have listened to my mom. She always told me to listen but I never did. I should of shown my love to her like she showed it to me when I was born.

I was born feet first, so they told her there was only one of us that would live. She said, "Let my son live — I've been through life, he's just coming to this world." Somehow they managed to keep both of us alive.

When she came to the US from Mexico, on the way they got robbed; my mom got raped. The only reason why she came here is for her sons to have a better life, and she went through that but she is still strong. I wish I would have shown my love to my mom in a better way instead of tears and making her stress all the time.

I made the decision of becoming a gangsta instead of making my decision of becoming a loving person. I wish I would have shown my love to my family, especially to my mom — she brought me to this world, therefore she is my queen.

Now I start making decisions that won't get me in trouble. I'm probably getting released March 30, 2004, so these are my words, but soon will be my actions.

Chantell Price SHU at Corcoran State Prison

Generations Under Siege

Before I take you through this sacred door in my soul, let me point out that changing the past is pointless without the effects of the experience! For example, if you trip over something that you did not know was there, would you think to lift your feet before you tripped? No! Why? Because you have not had the experience of tripping over something you did not see which would shock the conscious into being cautious. So whatever it is you would change in your past — if you could — should not be related to you directly, because you want to change the experience and not the actions! Plus, nine times out of ten we only want to change bad experiences, which is not realistic, because we actually learn more from bad experiences than good ones, especially in childhood!

Lights! Cameras! Action!

This door we stand before is like no other in my soul. It is faded brown from neglect, its hinges and doorknob are rusted from an unknown substance, from its crescent-moon shaped keyhole beams a radiant gold light, on the overhead door seal rests a jeweled sign that reads in dazzling sparks of blue, gold and purple, "The Priest, Servant of the Gods!" My right hand suddenly becomes heavy . . . the key! Yes, the key . . . I can feel its crescent moon shape before I see it.

I break eye contact with the mesmerizing sign and focus them on the beaming keyhole. Will the key fit? I know it will, yet I must rub the rusted edges of the keyhole for dream world's sake. Feeling the sharp rusted edges form a crescent moon I raise the key to the lock, only glancing at its jeweled handle briefly, not wanting to be mesmerized by its beauty, and insert it. I turn the key counterclockwise and step back, for the door will open vertically and in dream-like slow motion — it's always the same when I enter this part of my soul, speaking, moving and hearing in slow motion!

The door slowly opens into the unseen ceiling. I like this door and smile with pleasure at its strangeness. Inside the room is a blank whiteness from eye level, yet on the floor in rich dark soil are thousands upon thousands of blindfolded babies! They are crying, yet there's no sound, just expressions of confusion and fear! I know what is wrong — they can not see that the things they are crawling over and bumping into are other babies! They can't understand why they can not see! I can feel their fear and confusion — I should help . . . it's my duty to help!

I take a step to enter the room when suddenly I feel a hand resting on my shoulder. I turn to see . . . myself! No — it's not me, it's Chantell, the old me! Chantell speaks as different as he feels to me. "Priest," — his lips move in slow motion, but his words sound normal — "Priest, there are many of them," Chantell says, "You are only one priest! You'll never remove all the blindfolds." I stare into Chantell's coal black eyes; I could smell death on his breath, taste his hatred for others, and feel his flames of vengeance of warming my body! Oh so warm . . . so strange . . . the world is so cold and bitter . . . Chantell's ways are so warm and sweet, so mesmerizing . . .

No! There is no more Chantell! Only Priest! I am the Priest now and forever! Chantell smiles his wicked smile, displaying razor sharp fangs, and shrugs his winged, caped shoulders, then raises his clawed right hand and with a slender jeweled index finger points me into the room. When he speaks, his lips move normally, yet his words come out in slow motion: "The blind leading the blind." He starts to laugh uncontrollably.

Suddenly his laughter turns into a deafening roar. I

suddenly feel sick with confusion as the blindfolded milling babies' fear and confusion changes into a numb acceptance! I go to spin and face the door with all the speed of a god, yet I move in a dreamlike slow motion. I scream in frustration, "Yes . . . come on . . . yes . . . No! NO!" As I face the once endless miles of milling babies, the scene before me is horrifying: at the very end of the dark soil covered floor is a vast dark sea of raging fluid (selfishness) as black as Chantell's eyes and powerful as the flames of vengeance that burns in his heart.

Chantell did this! His essence oozes from every factor in this scene. All the babies are in hundreds of rows, crawling toward that dark sea of selfishness, still blindfolded, waiting to devour their innocent souls! No! It can't be . . . by the gods, it can't be . . . yet it is!

Several rows ahead — if my eyes do not deceive me — is my own child, Trinity, blindfolded and crawling toward that liquid demon of hatred, pain, suffering and selfishness like a mindless drone. May the gods give me their powers! I call to the ancient mother, and she makes me light as the wind. I speed toward the rows of babies thinking to head straight for own child, yet I speed past him and down the baby formed narrow alley, feet barely touching the dark soil, to divert the babies already entering the dark sea of self-righteousness. I make it to the first row of drone-crawling babies and call on Kia, the god of elements — raising my hands in the form of an invisible wall, I begin to push at the mass of dark fluid with my will. It does not move. I throw my will to the very center of the dark liquid and hear Chantell's devilish laugh. I push still! I believe . . . I am the Priest . . . servant of the gods . . . may their will be mine!

The dark fluid begins to move backward! I continue to push with the gods will, farther and farther. I push it from the blindfolded babies, yet they still continue to crawl toward it! By all gods, there is no one to turn them around, and if I stop pushing, it will sweep as like a tidal wave, and my own child is several rows behind! I have no choice but to push . . . push for my generations and all the generations to come! And by all the gods, push I shall 'til my will is broken!

Now we stand outside the sacred room, where alone Priest fights a never-ending battle against a society and environment that wishes to devour his generation and all others to come. Innocent souls seeking to fill their shells of a mind with selfishness, envy, fear of separation and poverty. Yet he fights not for himself, for he is lost in the essence of the battle, which makes him more suited for his duties!

The End.

(An explanation for the story: I have no desire to change anything in my life for me, yet I do desire to change things in it for my generation and yours! See, it is so hard for me to express my feelings and concerns about the ripple effect and the generational pond of tomorrow, for these days it is never calm; so many people cast their stones of hatred, selfishness, greed and carelessness into the generational pond of tomorrow that it's no longer suffering from never ending ripples [suffering, disease, poverty, illiteracy, gang banging, etc.], but from beach-sized tidal waves [suicide, psych ailments, homosexuality, religious massacres, etc.] that all run up on the shores pulling dirt [insanity], sand [obesity], pebbles and small rocks [drugs and guns] into the generational pond of tomorrow! Not to mention all the water [youths] being absorbed by the shore [death]. So if there had been a way I could have known what I was indirectly doing to the generations of tomorrow, I would have at least tried to muffle some of the pain, suffering, heartbreak and confusion in the environments I indirectly created caused you guys. But nevertheless, there is a room inside the Priest's soul where a battle rages on for the generations of tomorrow! Yet if I lose, know also that it is your duty not to be careless with your actions of today, for they affect the generations of tomorrow!)

When he speaks, his lips move normally, yet his words come out in slow motion: "The blind leading the blind." He starts to laugh uncontrollably.

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Nick

Alameda County Juvenile Hall

if i could go back and change something

If could do something over, it wouldn't be one thing, it would be several things. The first thing I would do over would be my schooling, because schooling plays a big part in our lives. I've never been real serious about school. I'm only seventeen and I need to gain as much knowledge as I can.

When it came to school I just didn't want to go, and when I did go, I got into trouble. My mom told me to go, but I didn't listen. She even called the police to take me to school a few times. However, that didn't work either.

If I could, I would go all the way back to kindergarten and start all over. I wouldn't miss one day of school and I would do all of my work. I'm just now realizing you can't go anywhere in life without education. You can't have a job or anything. I'm still young and have time to get my education.

While I'm incarcerated I'm going to read as many books as I can and study all the history I can. I'm also going to try and get into some vocational training. I want to be somebody in life and I want to make my mother proud.

She would always tell me, "Just do one thing for me — succeed and become somebody in life, and don't follow your father's footsteps or become like him."

The second thing I would do all over is pick different friends. My whole life I've surrounded myself around people that do drugs, sell drugs, and commit crimes. I started hanging out with people like this around when I was ten-and-a-half or eleven. So I started smokin' weed and drinkin' at a young age. Then as soon as I knew it, I started committing crimes, never committing any real serious crimes. However it all caught up to me in 2003 when I was arrested for attempted murder, attempted robbery, robbery, and assault with a deadly weapon. I believe if I would've chosen different friends and lived a different lifestyle, I wouldn't be in the situation I'm in today.

Another thing I would go back and do over again is the way I treated my mother. I disrespected my mother a lot throughout my life. She was a single mother on social

security, raising a boy all by herself. She did everything she could for me. She went without so she could put me in designer clothes. I didn't show her any appreciation at all. I only have one mother and she's the only person who's been there for me through my whole life, and through thick and thin. I wish I could go back and show her all the respect she deserved. The past seven months I've been incarcerated, our relationship has improved greatly and I've shown her nothing but respect.

I would also go back and change the "I don't give a shhh about life attitude" I had. All I ever cared about was gettin' loaded and actin' stupid. That's what I called livin' life to the fullest. It's a shame how wrong I really was.

There's so much more to life than drugs and actin' stupid. God says when you keep doing the same things over and over again and you get the same results, you are a fool. So I was living the life of a fool.

I just believed if I would've went about my life a different way, I would've never ended up facing what I'm facing today. I made a lot of mistakes throughout my life. I was hardheaded and didn't listen to what anybody told me what to do. That was my biggest mistake, not humbling myself and listening to what people have to say. They say what you don't know is what can get you killed. To tell you the truth, the way I was livin' my life, I was headed straight for death.

I may not be able to go back and change things, but my actions and choices now will determine how the future is for me. I am going to be locked up for awhile, so I have nothing but time to get my stuff together. I want to finish school and get my diploma. I also want to go to college and get a good job. Like I said, you ain't gonna go anywhere in life if you don't have an education. People respect you if you have an education and carry yourself in a proper manner. If you lack these two things, you will also have a hard time finding a good wife. I know I want to marry a smart, respectful and beautiful woman.

I've messed up for the most part of my life, so I would like to live a righteous life for the remainder of it. I've always lived my life in darkness and I'm tired of it. I now want to live my life in the light. So what I'm saying is that if I could do it all over again I would, just so I could live a Christ-like life since day one. The criminal aka thug life don't work for me — I get the same results every time, and that is being incarcerated. The only other result is death and I'm too young to go. So for now it's a straight and narrow for me. I'm done with living a life full of strife.

Mosi Bakari

Corcoran State Prison

What I Have Done I Would I Could Do Over

The pain. The shame. The fear. The tears. The madness. The sadness. The disappointment.

The things I think we all truly regret most are the opportunities/chances/risks we didn't take. But for me, of the things I have done, I regret most those that have caused those who loved/cared for/knew me, to feel/experience any/a few/all of the emotions I name above.

Especially when I have had been terrible/low/mean/vicious/ugly/inhumane, consciously/deliberately, or by just being inconsiderate/boneheaded/ignorant. In either case, for whatever reason, even now I sometimes cringe at being the agent/bearer/cause of such.

For these things damage souls, cripple minds, sap/drain the spirits of people, in particular, and all living things in general. These things corrode/erode/kill the life in people, in particular, and in all living things in general.

It's torturing me even now, to think of what I have done. You see, even after I have learned better. Because it is almost universally, by those who have been so psychologically/emotionally

afflicted/attacked, affected/damaged in this way, who are living in this state of being from whom all manifest crime springs.

Even now, after I've learned better; even after I've learned to have empathy, compassion, consideration; even now, as I'm learning to be humble, gentle, and patient, to love; even as my understanding/capacity/commitment to these grow and become stronger, the deeper my regret and my own pain. Because I can now see just how weak/wrong/ignorant I was and how much, much greater it is to have/be/impart these things to others.

The pain is only alleviated by my striving/devotion/focus every day to forever cling to empathy, compassion, consideration, humbleness, gentleness, patience, and love. These things are not only healing me, they soothe souls/clarify minds/lighten the spirits of people, in particular, all living things in general. These things nourish/nurture/stimulate the life in people, in particular, and in all living things in general. It is almost universally by those who have been so psychologically/emotionally associated/attached/affirmed/empowered in this way, who are living in this state of being, from whom all manifest creations spring/arise.

I now much more fully appreciate and understand the saying, "Live a good, honorable life. Then when you get older and look back, you'll be able to enjoy it a second time."

This feels so much better. Is so much more worthwhile.

This is what I would I could do over. This is what I am doing over. Your turn!

Love, peace, and hair grease.

Lil' LC

Alameda County Juvenile Hall

When The Devil Took Over My Life

When my whole life changed I still remembered it like if it were yesterday — in one second and one wrong alley, it was over.

Well, it started at the age of twelve, cutting school, throwing books at the teacher, having sex in the school bathroom, smoking and drinking between school breaks. I got suspended one day for the fourth time in two weeks.

Well, I did not go home 'til ten o'clock. When I got home my mom said it was too late to go stay with my patna. I went to his house, but he was not home. So on my way home I took a shortcut through an alley. It was about eleven o'clock at night. Some gang members blocked me off at the end of the alley. I was spooked as hell, because they was hella deep and I was only twelve. They were hella big.

They asked me where was I from and did I bang. I said, "No." Then they was, like, "Check it out, little cous'." Oh, but the thing I didn't know was my folks was with them and told them he knew me, so they were not trippin' on me.

I didn't notice him because it was hella dark and everybody had on hoodies covering their faces. I didn't have nowhere to go, so I started kickin' it with them. We got to their block and that's when I noticed my patna — he was hella drunk and he was like, "What's up?" I was like, "You kick it like this everyday?" He was like, "Sometimes."

I started drinking with them. They had some Bombay gin with some orange juice chaser. I started hitting it without the chaser and everybody was like, "He can drink."

After we killed the bottle I had to sit on the stairs, because my head was spinning. That's when they asked me if I smoked. I told them I did, but I said I was cool on the blunt because I was gone, but the smell kept getting to me. When the second blunt came around I was already feeling cool, so I hit it a couple of times. That's when I started seeing nothing but color and started getting hifey.

Everybody started flashing their guns and talking about who they had jumped. Then my patna Lil' V said to me, "Are you down

or what?" He said, "I know you down." At that time Lil' V was only a young teen and hella hype. I was like, "What is it?" then everybody was like, "Let's see if he down or what."

I had to fight a fifteen year old first. We had a good fight, until he swung and I ducked, and he hit a bush. Then his fist started bleeding and I took advantage of him by dipping him. After him, I had to fight a guy who was seventeen. He didn't want to fight, so I had to fight his brother, who was sixteen. I was hella drunk, so nothing really mattered to me.

It wasn't bad until the middle of the fight where everybody jumped in. That's when my patna Lil' V jumped in. We were still trying to hold it down. After like fifteen minutes, we called it quits. I had a black eye but I wasn't trippin', because it didn't hurt. After that it was over. Me and my patna Lil' V cut to his lady's house where we listened to music 'til we fell asleep.

After that day I was a changed person. I spent most of my time gang banging, drinking, smoking, and hitting house licks. That's when I started coming back and forth to juvenile hall.

I let the devil control me for five full years and I never did notice what I was doing to people. Now my folks can't get me out of here. I thought I was so bad that I could get out of anything but I was wrong and I now I see it five years later, but I'm already stuck in the system.

It started at the age of twelve, kicking it with OGs, putting in work for what I believed was a group that cared about me, but as I really think about it gangs don't care for nobody. I have seen people die and kill for the block and all I have seen happen is gang members having warrants, doing life in prison, or dead. I know five years ain't a lot, but to me I have seen enough, and I ain't going to end up dead because I'm out.

I'm giving my life to God, because that day I got jumped in I gave my life to the devil and for a minute he had control of me, but now I look back and see that I have just hurt people and it's only worse. People may laugh or whatever, but if we were on the outs, it would be a whole different story.

I'm tired of hurting my family, and it's about time I get back on the right track before it's too late, so as for right now I'm giving my heart to God. Now I'm making a new purpose for my life and now I plan to go to CYA and get my GED, go to fire camp, do my nine months, and make something out of my life, and finally make my mom proud of me and hopefully succeed in life — but it has to start right now.

People tend to take their moms for granted, but I went overboard. I didn't care. I was so cold-hearted and hateful.

H. Lauren Black Canyon Correctional Facility for Girls (Phoenix, Arizona)

My Life

My name is Lauren; I am seventeen years old. I have been in and out of Durango in Maricopa County for about five years, and I finally ended up in Black Canyon Corrections Facility for Girls.

I have made so many bad choices since age twelve, and I'd pretty much do them all over, but the one that really affects me the most wasn't the gangs, drugs, or crimes I was involved in, because to me those are the little bumps in the road of my life I can always overcome. But the one that has really affected my life — and led to the gangs, drugs and crimes — was my relationship with my mom.

Since the age of twelve I have been so rebellious and pushed my mom away, never listening to what she had to say. I was always too busy in my fake little world of friends and drugs to realize she loved me and wanted me to succeed and have the good life she never had.

I would always lie to her and run away. I never shared my feelings with her or let her get to know me as a person, and I would

never take the time to do the same. People tend to take their moms for granted, but I went overboard. I didn't care. I was so cold-hearted and hateful.

My dad hasn't been around since I was seven years old when they split up. I blamed my mom for that. I blamed her for everything. If I got a bad grade in school or was just straight up mad at the world, my mom was always the one blamed. One time I even had the nerve to say, "I wish you would have died instead of my Aunt Holly." My aunt died on New Year's Day eleven years ago, and even now the subject still hurts my mom.

I would do it over by taking back the last ten years and replacing them with respect, love and understanding.

I would respect my mom for being a hard-working, once single mom taking care of two bratty kids. I would respect her for being so strong and putting up with us. I would respect my mom for making her money legally and proudly. She was a hard working waitress living off of tips and always put us first.

I would respect her rules and beliefs 'cause if I would have, I wouldn't be here today.

I would love my mom for being so cool and never giving up on me. I would love my mom for bringing me into this world. And I would love my mom for making sure I always had clean clothes, a roof over my head, and food in my stomach. And last but not least, I would have an understanding that she's my mom — she's been through so much more than I've been through. She's trying to help me grow into a wonderful young lady and wants the best.

I have spent so many years hating her and pushing her away when I could have been building a relationship. That's how I'd do it over.

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Eugene Weems Salinas Valley State Prison in Soledad, California

What Have I Done In My Life That I Would Do Over

In order to change something about myself, I first had to acknowledge the existence of my dissatisfaction and recognition of my problems, and then I realize I've taken the first step to improvement. A change comes by consistency, faith, time, patience, and self-determination. What I have done in my life a wish will not undo, but a change for the better can be accomplished.

"Grandma, stop! Stop! I don't want any of that on me," as the fake tears started to roll down his eyes that followed with cries and the whimper of a little boy's rebelliousness for the agitation of being compelled to stand still for his mandatory grooming essentials. "Boy, if you don't stand still and cut that racket out, you better — and let Grandma put some lotion on your dry tail," she said in a way that could be taken as a threat. "Shy as you is, how do you expect to go somewhere looking like a homeless child? No, sir, not my baby. As long as God give me the will to see another day, you will learn how to keep yourself up, and carry yourself as a respectful young man with a good moral upbringing. I'll see to it, if that's the last thing I ever do," Grandma said, with seriousness in her voice.

She was a God-fearing woman with a down-Southern accent. She was beautiful in every aspect of its meaning, and educated. She spoke words that were beyond my comprehension. She was caring, trustworthy, forgiving and loving.

"Too loving and forgiving," I criticized many times in the silence of my thoughts. As I tried hard to keep the tears flowing down my eyes, she paid no attention to my pathetic performance. "Now wipe them phony tears off your face and let Grandma see that handsome smile," she demanded. I wondered to myself for a few seconds to how did she know my tears weren't genuine. I've always thought that she was the smartest woman in the world and possessed the answers to all my questions and problems, but I wasn't about to seek an answer to that question — no sir-ee! — because it was a possibility that I might be setting myself up for failure, an' a butt-whipping might accompany the answer for my deceitfulness.

During the years, she embedded her teachings and beliefs into my subconscious, but my outlook on life was different from hers. I was spiteful, selfish, untrusting, and harvested a negative outlook on life as well as people. It had to be my way or no way. I was quick to turn up my nose, ruffle my face expression, and deny a person my helping hand. I trusted no one but my Grandma. She was quick to come with a cliché when she noticed my behavior towards other people. She normally would come straight out and let me know when she wasn't in approval of my ways. "Baby, you need to stop being so selfish, and learn to love your fellow neighbors. Like the Bible says, 'God don't like ugly and He sees all that you do.' You can't hide nothing from Him, because He knows everything," she would say.

Those same lines of words she would preach to me throughout the years. As I got older, my heart became loving. Her ways always kept a Kool-Aid smile on my face, even when there wasn't anything to smile about. "Baby, I raised you well. You are a fine young man who's going to make some lucky woman happy one day. You just make sure she's a God-fearing woman and has a loving heart," Grandma said.

I looked into the mirror that hung on the wall above the smaller Armani leather sofa in the living room. I admired my handsomeness, my smooth caramel complexion and brown eyes that match.

Time seemed to have gone by so fast. Just five years ago I was only ten years old and now I'm almost a man, standing at the height of six feet. I thought that I was God's gift to women. As conceived as I was, I was surprised that I had any female friends. I glanced at my No Question watch and advanced for the door. "Where you think you' going, young man?" Grandma asked. I was just going down the street to hang out with a few friends, I explained. "OK, now don't you be getting into any trouble. You know God is watching you, and don't let them street lights catch you." There she went with one of her old folks' clichés again, I said to myself. Don't let the street light catch me — I understood clearly what she meant. She wanted me back inside the house before the street lights came on.

"I will be," I said before exiting the house.

"What's up, folks?" James greeted me, holding out a clinched fist for some dap. We both taped fists an' gave each other a hug. "What brought

you this way?" James asked. "I know you ain't trying to get at some money?"

"You got that right. That's what I'm not trying to do," I admitted. "You know I don't get down like that, fool."

"Yeah, I know. Your grandma would beat you to death," James said, with a light giggle, as if he found something humorous about what he had just said. "Well, you already know what's up with me. I'm just trying to make a few dollars. I have about ten more stones I have to dump off and I'm calling it a day."

"You need to slow your folks and stop selling that poison in the community. You not doing nothing but hurting yourself."

"Now who in the hell you think you are, grandmamma's boy? Jesse Jackson or Malcolm X or somebody? How a house nigga like yourself who's always up under his Grandma all day and night goin' to tell me what I should and shouldn't be doing? Fool, you better miss me with that. Are you and your Grandma going to put food on my family table? Are y'all going to pay the house rent and clothe my little sistas and brothas?" James shouted out in anger. That's what I thought; so take your Martin Luther King, Jr. 'I Have A Dream' speeches somewhere else and preach that bull to someone who might want to hear it."

"James, my brotha, I used to be just like you, negative, and didn't trust anyone, and I also had a lot of hatred built up inside of me, just like yourself. I guess that's a phase we all go through when growing up in the ghettos, but we don't have to remain that way. I want you to know I'm not against you. If you ever need my help, you can depend on me. I feel your pleas, though, but I'm about to floss over to this tender's house and chill with her for a few. You are welcome to stroll along. She has an older sister that is a dime piece with the bomb body. She'll give you some play if you got a cool mouthpiece."

"I'm cool, folks — I gots to get at this money."

"OK, then I'm up out of here," I said before throwing up a peace sign.

"Hey, you two, don't either of you move. Stay right where you are," said the deep voice of a man, who came out of nowhere.

"What the hell?" James said, as he looked around to see the face of the man who was talking.

"I said, don't move," the man yelled at James. That sent shivers up my legs. James dropped down his drugs that were in a small plastic zip-lock bag and kicked it to the ground where I stood.

"Folks, get that and make a break for it," James said in a whisper, without moving his mouth, as if he was panicking. "Please, homie, I'm not trying to go to jail. If he find it, that's where I'm going. I'm already on paranoid. I can't afford to go back to prison. I got to take care of my family. They need me there with them. Just grab the sack and break through the yard. Come on, folks, you said if I ever need you, you will be there for me. I need you right now," said James, sounding as if he was about to cry.

I thought to myself, "I did tell him that, and what if my Grandma found out that I didn't stay loyal to my word?" I quickly grabbed the plastic sack from the ground and was in the wind. The tall Black man gave chase. I scaled the back fence with ease; he continued to give chase.

"Stop right there. I am a police officer!" he yelled at me, as if that was supposed to have any significance to me. I ran into the open street and ran like I was Jesse Owens in an Olympic race. The cop was in my dust.

I ran into my Aunt Bee's yard and scaled her backyard brick gate. One jump and a push off from my hands planted on top of the bricks, and I was over the eight-foot gray wall; that put me into the backyard of my own house. I walked quickly to the front yard, still breathing hard, trying to catch my breath and compose myself before entering the house. I never gave a thought to look down the street to see if James was okay. My heartbeat was pounding fast. I walked into the house, hoping that my Grandma wouldn't start questioning me, but she was nowhere in sight. That was a relief. I hid the drugs in a cabinet above the refrigerator that I know my Grandma would never go in. I knew if she had known I'd brought drugs into her house, she might have a heart attack after she finished trying to stomp a mud hole in me. I motioned for a glass from the dish rack and took the blue pitcher out the refrigerator and poured some of the grape Kool-Aid that it held. I emptied the glass as quickly as I filled it. I went and sat on the La-Z-Boy chair, turned on the screen TV and started watching BET, Comic View. My hearted continued to pound fast, beating like a bass drum against my chest. Years later, it continued to beat at that fast pace, and even now it's beating with extreme adversity.

So what have I done in my life that I wish I could do over? I have allowed myself to become a victim for people's selfish and negative motives by allowing myself to become susceptible to my Grandma's teachings of love, caring, loyalty, and being trustworthy, and if I had a chance to do it over, I would do it all over again the same way, but I would just run a lot faster.

D-Boy

Salinas Valley State Prison in Soledad, CA

One Mo 'Gain

What have I done in life that I wish I could do over? Damn that's a very good question. Can I choose more than one thing? That's a difficult question 'cause I done did so much in my life. Hmmm! Well ya'll asked for it, so here it is:

Starting from the very beginning . . . First of all, I will spend more time with my grandfather out in his quiet neighborhood rather than watching and soaking up game from my uncles who were as deep in the game as one can ever get. I would view the streets as what it was, rather than just be mesmerized by the good things. I would take heed to the commercials that said knowledge is the key, and listen to grown folks when they said, "If you don't change you gone be just like yo uncle."

Me and my little sister would be closer than what we are now; I would be an almost perfect big brother. I hate that I used to make her mad all the time, hitting her 'cause she couldn't fight back, for them reasons are the barrier in between us. 'Til this day, she won't really take my advice because she feels that I don't love her.

I'd have stuck to sports — baseball and football — and went on to be one of the greatest to play one of the two. I would talk my mother more and let her know how I felt unwanted and not be so arrogant. I would talk more with my whole family, expressing my feelings, pain, needs and everything else. I wouldn't expect to them automatically know what I felt inside. That way a solution could be worked out to prevent the life I now live.

Starting from the time I got into the game I would stack all my chedda. I'd embrace knowledge from all different angles. Being that nobody's perfect, I probably still would have had the knowledge and patience — I could have took it and used it to make my paypa grow, and not to mention retire from the same as BG, and before I slipped.

If I would have kept playing sports, the game would have been foreign to me. If I would have got closer to my granddaddy, a Vietnam veteran who believes in God and in hard "legal" work, rather than my "kingpin" uncles, I would have despised the game.

I should have paid more attention to those victims who lost their life due to those ferocious shootouts that left blood baths. From the day that my momma's boyfriend put his hands on me, I'd sit on my momma down and let her know how dude acted when she was gone. Instead of holding everything in, afraid that my feelings would be damaged, I'd only release them so people would understand me and the things I did.

My momma would be my best friend and my family would be one solid foundation. All the knowledge and wisdom they showered me with would go in one ear and put to use, instead of out the other one.

My Uncle L would be an example. I would learn from his mistakes rather than my own. I would see right through all the evilness and wicked, and choose my friends and surrounding more carefully. Instead of living before my time, I would play my position as a child and be grown when the time is appropriate. That would have stopped me from feeling so old at this young age.

I would've listened to my mother when she said, "How you carry yourself in public reflects on me." With that I would carry myself like an intelligent lil' boy with the utmost respect and manners my mother always demonstrated. Y'all

still with me? That ain't even the half of it.

Another thing I'd have to take back is all those days I helped destroy the egos of all the so-called nerds, ugly, fat, etc. that I picked on all through school. I'd even take back all the times I put gum in girls hair. I didn't know any better. In return I'd be their friends like I really wanted to do, not caring what others would say and think. I'd wear all those Payless Shoes I didn't like instead of hiding or throwing them away, unaware that that was money. I would not sneak into my mother's room to see the gifts before they were wrapped spoiling my surprise.

I wish I would've never found our family Bible that my momma hid her money in, I should have put 20 dollars in there instead of taking it.

If I could have "Eboni" back I'd treat her like the queen she is and not try to impress her with my bravery and macho-ness. She would be my wife right now with my kids. We would spend endless nights conversating and having fun like a solid family should. I would go out my way to protect her and make her happy even if my life had to be risked. We'd live in a custom-made mansion built from the ground away from all the madness. If this was back in time I would put her before my so-called friends without a second thought. I'd let a reality slap me and realize that a soulmate like that only comes once, but very rarely twice, in a lifetime . . .

My temper would be one of the things I would definitely have to reconsider. My temper is like the main reason for all my pain, sorrow, grief, and every other messed up thing I've been through. I'd learn to control my emotions instead of letting other people trigger them so easily. I would be brave enough to stand up to my peers, not letting them pressure me into doing all types of things I did just to earn stripes or be accepted, and if I didn't participate I would remind myself that that doesn't mean what they say about me is true. After all, they are only words. I would stop being childish and wouldn't let the word of mouth provoke me into doing something stupid.

(Beat: I apologize that all my regrets isn't in order by category, but there's too many of them — feel me?)

But anyway, I would have stayed in school, graduated, went to my prom, grad night, and just enjoyed the school atmosphere in general, making my mother proud of me. I would've kept my eyes on the big picture by thinking big and strategizing and plotting a plan to birth a multi-million dollar empire, instead of falling prey of the fast, short, filthy money, that lose-your-life money.

I wish I had spent more time to get to know myself and recognize my talents early in the game. I would let my mind expand like some elastic adjusting to different things, not just one. It would be no limits to my destiny. Other than turn my back on a "legit" life, I would accept all possibilities. I'd learn more about something before I got into it.

The one thing that should have been first is: I remember when I was five — maybe six — I was playing and I heard a man calling a name (not mines). So I went to the front of the apartment and seen something that I will never forget. I seen a man murdered in cold blood for the first time, but not the last. That really shook me up; it took a major toll on me as well as influenced me. I wish I had minded my own business. That particular incident stole a few of my marbles and loosened up some of my screws. I think it was because I was very close to the victim. I if could just choose one thing, just one it would be this.

That about wraps it up. The reason I haven't mentioned anything about my criminal history or current predicament is because if I had a chance to rewrite that first chapter of my life, anything after that would lead to the complete opposite of what it has turned out, as of today. Ya feel? Love you all! D-Boy, still real!

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Michael Markhasev Corcoran State Prison SHU

If I Could, I Would . . .

O, if I could, I surely would
construct a pyramid of good
and set myself to never fail
or ever waste a day in jail.

Yet glancing back upon my years —
tarnished by recklessness and smears
it's hard to know where I would start;
perhaps I'd need a brand new heart . . .

And then, I'd try my life again:
compose myself a winning plan
retain the knowledge I possess
and pray it leads me to success.

I'd seek to be as a man should:
respectful, kind and never rude
I'd set my heart upon the prize
and turn away from empty lies.

I would forget how to despise
and learn, instead, how to be wise
I'd cherish life with open eyes
enjoy each sunset and sunrise.

I would rewind each wasted day
each blessing that I threw away
I'd meet with love and mercy's way
each act of anger and dismay.

I would roll back the years of shame
when I had acted like a lame
and forge myself a brand new name —
being unspotted by ill-fame.

I would each foolish act replace
with act of goodness and of grace
I would undo my mom's disgrace
and wipe the tears from her face.

Another's problem I would see
a gentleman I'd try to be —
responsibility not flee

and all stupidity foresee.

My teenage fun would have to wait
I'd start my life with a clean slate
with piles of knowledge on my plate
and not the fellas at the gate.

I'd stay away from all the drugs
from robbing, dealing, busting mugs
from hanging out with the thugs —
instead I'd practice giving hugs.

I'd finish school —
not to be cool
but to avoid being a fool!
In this world, it's the nerds who rule . . .

I'd give to poor
I'd pain endure
for heartbreak I would find a cure
and not misuse my time for sure.

I wouldn't fill my heart with hate
I wouldn't play games with my fate
in fact, it may not be too late —
why should I stall, why should I wait?

Life is too short to be a game
it's like a painting in a frame;
once paint's applied, and once it dries
it means success or brings demise.

It is a gift that's given once
to live it right or as a dunce
that's why each day we have to choose
and put our heads unto good use.

If I could live my life again
how should I know that in that span
it would flow smoothly as I plan —
life's more complex than plans of men.

With circumstances, variations
innumerable obligations
who knows where other roads would lead,
what new defects the years would breed?

Who sees the storms?
Who knows their forms?
Like killer bees, they strike in swarms
while contradicting all the norms!

Is there any guarantee
the road before me I would see

and tragedies there wouldn't be —
just "clear sailing on the sea"?

A fool's a fool at any rate
no one but God can change his fate
a million chances he'll abuse
and live his life only to lose.

And so, my life was but a waste
my sins caught up with me in haste;
and now I'm stuck with "If I could . . .",
but would that really do me good?

My ball and chain I cannot shift
my past wrongdoings I can't lift,
between us is a spaceless rift,
but in a way, it is a gift!

Regrets are chains we drag along
which weary both the weak and strong
and though, indeed, they hurt and burn
it's thanks to them we ever learn.

In fact, don't give me any slack,
and though my past's a burning wreck
I can't waste time in looking back
or fret about what I lack!

That which is past in past I'll leave
and though at times my soul does grieve
why should I hope for a reprieve?
"What ifs" only excuses weave.

This is my measure of success:
not how much money I possess,
but how I handle my mistakes —
for true success, that's what it takes.

And though each day (even today)
I often stumble in the way,
I'll keep on striving as I may
and try until my hair's grey.

Fact is, I'm doing life in jail
with folks who stress and grow more pale,
who go insane when there's no mail
and look at life as through a veil.

O, if I could, I surely would
repaint the past the way I should,
but since I can't, I just repent
and make my future better spent . . .

Reno Orphan Corcoran State Prison

If Only

In retrospect, our lives tend to be more enigmatic than we often realize. Hindsight doesn't necessarily constitute wisdom, insight or understanding, and damn sure doesn't make it 20/20.

Choices are obstacles we navigate the best we can, going along making the one we think is right. Time or reaction to the chosen action serves as a compass whether it was a good or bad decision.

No matter the choices — fight, trust, lie, have kids, insult, ignore, pull the trigger, steal, do dope, love, drive drunk, excel, be happy, be miserable, or one of another 100,000 choices — we are fascinated, even obsessed, with the "What If Theory?" You know?

As a kid on the playground it's "ollie, ollie oxen free" or "do-overs." In golf it's a "mulligan." In mythology it's a lantern and three wishes. In Star Trek it's black holes and alternative time continuums. In "Back to the Future" it's a Delorean and Flux Capacitor. Finally, in a near death experience, our lives flash before our eyes, and we're jerked from the bright light to fix what was flawed.

If I had to do it again, I'd go 25 years back when I was wreaking havoc on my mom's relationship as she tried to piece together a

new life — two families and their constantly changing dynamic. Everything old was still different. All that was new tended to be the antithesis of what I wanted or considered fair. So I continued to be defiant, picking fights with her beau's kids and carrying that same behavior to school.

When confronted, my answer for everything was, "I don't know." I was put into boxing to learn discipline. Medication was considered. You name it, it'd been tried and failed!

I raised so much hell I had to be shipped north to Alaska and my father. Even with my relocation, I'd already driven a large enough wedge to where irreparable damage had been done, leaving divorce the only alternative.

Fast-forward 25 years: my mom is alone and a cynic with regard to men, love and wedded bliss.

So if opportunity for a do-over presented itself I'd pick that. Going through anew with an awareness of the power of my words and actions, how much they leveraged against that or any relationship, old or new.

The alternative timeline would exist without the fights at home or school, and without the rebellion and disrespect to any and all adult authority figures. Nor would it have required the move with my father.

Here and now, odds certainly would be against my serving a life sentence. But even if my crime was set in stone, I would have a great piece of mind knowing my mom was not alone and had so meone to grow old with, a love that is tangible and hers. More importantly, she'd never have to wonder why I'd deny her that.

DIVERSITY Diversity is back in our pages! This talented writer/poet drops his two cents, or should we say three knockout pieces from "Life in My Cell," as well as two poems titled, "Wipe Out," and "Blessed Life." Lastly, He writes a the thoughtful piece titled, "Happy Birthday To Me." For the last year Diversity has been featured in our pages, it gives us a great pleasure to share his work with you all. Diversity writes us from Santa Clara County Jail.

Wipe out

engulfed
taken over
drowned in emotion
sorrow, anger, love, hate, peace, and
envy
there's no end.
a song
tinkling in my ear
calms me
brings me above
I can breathe
I'm sober
no longer drunk on emotion
still trapped
but free
the wave crashed.

**I hate my cell, though I
respect the space
it gives.**

Happy birthday to me

What's up, Beat? Yo' boy Diversity is good. Today's my 23rd, and though there is no new shoes, clothes or money, I have life. I never imagined doing time on my b-day or an entire holiday season. Yet I'm still good in mind and spirit.

Today is another highlight I cross off my calendar until April 27 when I get released. When you are taken away from an environment and placed in another, you see a world of difference. Also, you see inside deeper into yourself.

The O'Jays had a song that said, "My body's here with me but my mind's on the other side of town." How true those words are. Depending on what's on the other side of town, you may want to re-evaluate the scene.

Where my mind is is at home doing good by means of working, dodging the street life and accomplishing goals to set me up in my future. It is death to make you appreciate life, imprisonment to value freedom, hurt and pain to respond with joy and happiness.

In these cells, bunks and dorms it takes only a minute to be repulsed and disgusted by your environment. Yet once free, we return to the same place that got us in jail. I wrote a piece a while back, and I just stressed how you CAN change your life if not your surroundings. We got to believe in us, God, and change to overcome and prosper.

With the energy to post up, stroll the strip, we can get GEDs, college educations, jobs and happy homes to boot. This can only be done with our effort. God helps those who help themselves, so don't bash – get up and get to it.

In My Cell!

In my cell, I am alone physically, but the spirit of the Creator is always with me — in me. I sometimes become stressed out and then, there in my lowest feelings, a new world comes into view. I think of those who have hurt me, but good times come of the thought of them. I find I can escape inside of a book and become personal with the characters. In my cell, my mind is constantly thinking, planning, and searching for the right alleys to reach my goals.

As bizarre as it seems, I find peace in my cell. When I sing, I don't have a great voice, but I hold a strong note. The songs I sing release the eating emotions inside and I can express how I am feeling.

Another outlet I have is my hair. I've learned how to twist my hair as well as cor-roll it, too, two things I did not know how to do before considering that I came in here with a fade.

But sometimes in all the writing, reading, planning, and hair tricks, I am still lost inside of myself, inside of my cell.

I read the Bible faithfully everyday and try to give each day a good start. I have but only one picture in my cell. It is of me at the age of nine — chubby, and in the third grade. I have a manila envelope of all my letters and one holding all my cards.

My cell is kept clean and neat, so I can think clearly without being confused by any clutter.

I hate my cell, though I respect the space it gives. I would say I'm the ideal inmate: I respect others and cause no headaches for the staff, and I do my best to keep my cool.

My cell passes inspection every Wednesday and that says something. My cell has given me a great experience and learning lesson, something I will never forget. This cell is my temporary housing — I refuse to say home! I treat my cell as I would any place I am staying.

In my cell, the bricks has shattered and maimed minds. I will be able to leave my cell, but my cell will always have itself and an awaiting occupant to take in its offering?

Blessed Life

Each day is to celebrate
Each day be grateful.
There is never a time too late
To become ready, willing and able.
Each day love
Because you never know who you love will be taken away.
Love and life is always enough
Even when it doesn't look that way.
Life is blessed in the morning when you rise.
Blessed is life that gives you the time.

My love you all

**Where my mind is is at home
doing good by means of
working, dodging the street
life and accomplishing goals
to set me up in my future.**

MAURICIO CASTAÑEDA

Es un honor tener a Mauricio quien nos escribía al Beat Within desde las juveniles y ahora nos escribe para The Beat Without desde San Mateo County. El nos escribe sobre los planes que tiene para cambiar su vida y recuperar a la persona que más quiere. Le queremos decir que está haciendo lo correcto en pensar de la manera como lo está haciendo. Esperamos escuchar más cosas positivas de su vida y saber cual será su paso siguiente. Lo estaremos esperando para escuchar más de él.

It is an honor to have Mauricio, who used to write for The Beat Within in juvenile hall, writing to The Beat Without from San Mateo County Jail. He writes us about the plan he has to change his life around and to get back the person he loves the most. For our part, we want him to know that he is doing the right thing by thinking the way he is. We want to hear more positive things from him and know what his next step will be. We are waiting to hear from him again.

El Amor Nadie Lo Cambia

Una carta es mi esperanza para saber de ti y sólo de esta forma te puedo decir que todavía te amo aunque tus papas no aceptan nuestra relación. Ellos saben que te amo al igual como me amas tú a mí, pero lo que ellos no saben es que cuando un amor es prohibido más grande se hace.

Te amo y eso nadie lo podrá cambiar. Yo sé que ahorita no estoy a tu lado, pero algún día muy lejano podré demostrarte que te amo y que por ti estoy dispuesto a cambiar para que así nadie ni nada nos vuelva a separar.

Tú eres la ilusión que tengo para poder sobrevivir en este lugar y de querer salir de este triste lugar. Esta es la primera vez en cuatro años que estamos separados sólo de presencia porque el mundo nunca te podrá separarte de mis pensamientos. Te amo y nunca te voy a dejar de amar.

Nobody Can Change Love

A letter is my only hope of knowing how you are living, and it is only in this way that I can tell you that I still love you even though your parents do not accept our relationship. They know that I love you the same amount that you love me, but what they don't know is when love is prohibited, the bigger the love becomes.

I love you and that's something that nobody can change. I know that right now I'm not by your side, but it's going to be a while before I can show you that I love you, and for you, I'm willing to change so no one and nothing can or will separate us from each other ever again.

Thinking of you helps me stay strong in this place and is what helps keep me motivated to make sure that I get out of here someday. This is the first time in four years that we have been separated from one another, but only our physical presence, because not even the world will ever be able to separate you from my thoughts. I love you and I'm never going to stop loving you.

Ya No es un juego

Mi vida en mi celda es diferente a como los de la juvenile. Tengo dos semanas desde que me trajeron aquí de la juvenile. Pues aquí tengo más tiempo para pensar en el futuro y lo que tengo que cambiar en mi futuro, porque para mí, esto ya pasó de juego de niño ya se acabó.

Ahora sé lo que es cárcel en realidad. Y en verdad me siento sólo en este lugar, porque yo que más quisiera estar afuera con las personas que quiero, en especial a una morra que la extraño tanto.

Pues he aprendido la lección, que me ha puesto el destino y he decidido cambiar mi vida para el bien mío y para el bien de mis seres queridos.

it is not a game

My life in my cell is different from the life in a cell of those in juvenile. It's been two weeks since they brought me here from juvenile. Well, I have more time to think about the future and what I need to change in my future, because for me, all those games that I played as a juvenile are over with.

Now I know what jail is really like, and to be honest, I feel lonely in this place because what I want most in life right now is to be outside with my loved ones, especially this one female who I miss very much.

Well, I've learned my lesson that destiny has taught me and I've decided to change my life around for my own betterment and also for the good of my loved ones.

DONALD WINSTON

Donald Winston is a patient man. Patient about serving his time, and patient about seeing his words printed in The Beat. We praise him for both. Donald writes from Pelican Bay State Prison in California. We hope you can appreciate the beautiful poem he has written and his heartfelt letter.

Dear Beat Within:

Thanks for your guidance and perspective. It has been a challenging time. Yesterday went smoothly and sweetly. Today was tough. I got pretty rattled in the middle of the day and had to get outside and walk around. You know things are rough when walking around a garbage dump feels like refuge.

I had a few moments of expressed frustration before I left. I turned it inward fairly quickly, but I felt pretty weak at not being able to be a man of peace and wisdom and compassion.

As I read on I noticed that I kept having trouble seeing and my face felt like it was on fire. So I reached up and started to rub my eyes and it was only then that I realized that I had tears in my eyes and running down my face. Then they came freely as I knelt to thank God for that Beat Within and for you and all the others that are trying to bring the world together to live in harmony with each other and with God.

It has been a long time since I was able to let my heart open up and let myself really be free and feel again.

I'm not ashamed to tell the whole world that I have found a new life. I see a lot of changes in my life already from my daily meditation practice. It's working wonders and I seem to be getting closer to peace already.

death on the wind

People kill things every day
From love to idle time.
And some things die anyway,
From life to idle minds.

It couldn't really hurt to die.
No more than it hurts to live.
The people left always crying.
When there's nothing left to give.

Death is just the final sleep
As dust to dirt we go.
In little piles, that dirt we sweep
And the wind outside still flowed.

And the wind kills time itself
It eats away this earth
And everything once known as wealth
The wind will turn to dirt.

To know death is to know the wind.
That whispers through the trees.
And death is just another friend
Blowin' on the breeze.

I've messed up for the most part of my life, so I would like to live a righteous life for the remainder of it.

I've always lived my life in darkness and I'm tired of it. I NOW WANT TO LIVE MY LIFE IN THE LIGHT.

Check out the rest of Nick's piece, "If I Could Go Back And Change Something," along with the first batch of our Editor's Note Contest Entries, starting on page 79